

# MASTER PLAN for the Town of EGREMONT



March 2003

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and the Town of Egremont .*

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*\*Maps were developed using MassGIS information and are for reference purposes only since they may contain inaccuracies. More detailed maps will be developed as needed for any future land use planning. Copies of this plan on file with the Egremont Town Hall and Egremont Library contain color maps. Due to high printing costs, copies for circulation may contain black-and-white maps.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Master Plan was developed under the guidance of an appointed Master Plan Steering Committee. Members of the Master Plan Steering Committee for all or part of the process included:

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Members of the Egremont Planning Board and the Mount Washington Planning Board provided additional assistance.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission served as the Lead Planning Consultant for the project and produced this document with the assistance of the Steering Committee. Former Senior Planner Thomas Skogland provided technical assistance to the Committee while they developed this plan and the corresponding Open Space and Recreation Plan. Kara Roggenkamp, BRPC former Intern, provided much of the research, compiled the community survey and helped set-up the Public Forum. As of November 2000, BRPC Senior Land Use Planner, Joellyn Gregory assumed leadership of the Master Plan process. John Schmid and Mark Maloy, GIS Coordinators, provided necessary and useful mapping assistance. Charles Cook, Senior Transportation Planner, provided technical support. Nathaniel Karns, Executive Director, helped secure funding and provided project guidance.

The Community Planning Forum was facilitated by Joel S. Russell, Woodlea Associates.

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Special thanks to all the townspeople who took the time to think about Egremont's future, respond to the survey, and attend the numerous forum sessions and hearings to express their opinions.



## Executive Summary

The Town of Egremont is a small, rural New England town that boasts a unique natural beauty and landscape. Forested areas, agricultural lands, scenic roads and vistas, recreational lands and waters, and sensitive habitat areas combine to create a community treasured by its residents. Until recently these areas have remained mostly in their natural state. However, increased development pressures from more urban areas have begun to threaten the town's ability to retain its uniqueness and sense of small town character. In response, residents and community leaders have begun to examine how these resources might be better protected for use and enjoyment by future generations. This Plan is the result of this examination.

This Plan illustrates the desires of the residents as recorded in survey and community forum responses. The results showed an overwhelming belief that Egremont has a "good" or "excellent" quality of life. In general, those that responded to the questions were homeowners (95%), have lived in Egremont more than 20 years (42%), are permanent residents (67%) and plan to stay in Egremont for at least another 5 years. Respondents also showed that they are generally satisfied with the condition of the town and prefer not to see a lot of change.

Overall, half the respondents favored keeping the current development policy of allowing single-acre lots throughout town, while the other half favored more concentrated development in the villages, somewhat less dense around the villages, and least dense development in more remote areas of town. The survey results also showed favorable support for those elements that hold the greatest importance for defining the character of Egremont such as natural beauty, forests, mountains and uplands, rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.

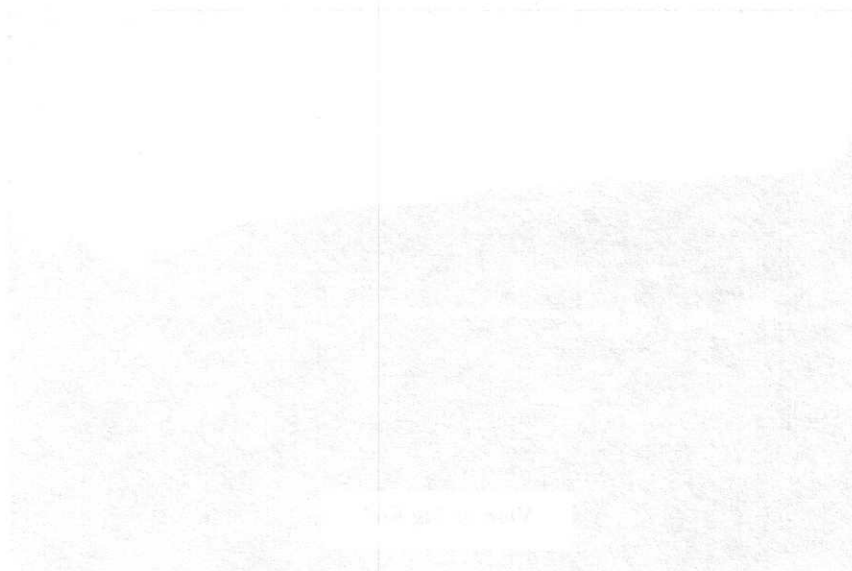
In spite of the residents' desire to maintain the town in its current state, market pressures have begun to accelerate change. The number of full-time and seasonal residences continues to rise and its part-time population continues to grow. Land consumption to support this continued growth is on the rise. The number of dwelling units has nearly doubled since the early 1960's. This has resulted in over 320 acres consumed for new residential uses.

While much of the land in Egremont is permanently protected, large tracts of land still remain vulnerable to development. According to Egremont's Build-Out analysis 5,927 acres are still available for development. Much of this land currently exists as forestland scattered throughout the rural areas of the town. Most new homes tend to be larger, with a smaller household than the typical home traditionally built in town, and occupy over 3 acres of land.

Understanding the desires of the community in relation to the actual conditions uncovers a disconnect for the path of Egremont's future. Evidence shows that Egremont is on a dangerous path towards losing its rural environment, New England character and community quality of life. Managing the rate and type of growth is essential to the future of Egremont. Spatial efficiency in land use development and management of prime agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas is the major theme echoed throughout this Master Plan.

The general purpose of this Plan is to provide the residents of Egremont with information related to the community's strengths and threats and provide priority action strategies for managing these issues. Residents have a vital role to play since the future of Egremont rests with their actions and decisions.

Participation in creating and implementing this Plan and the related Open Space Plan are essential to the future of Egremont.



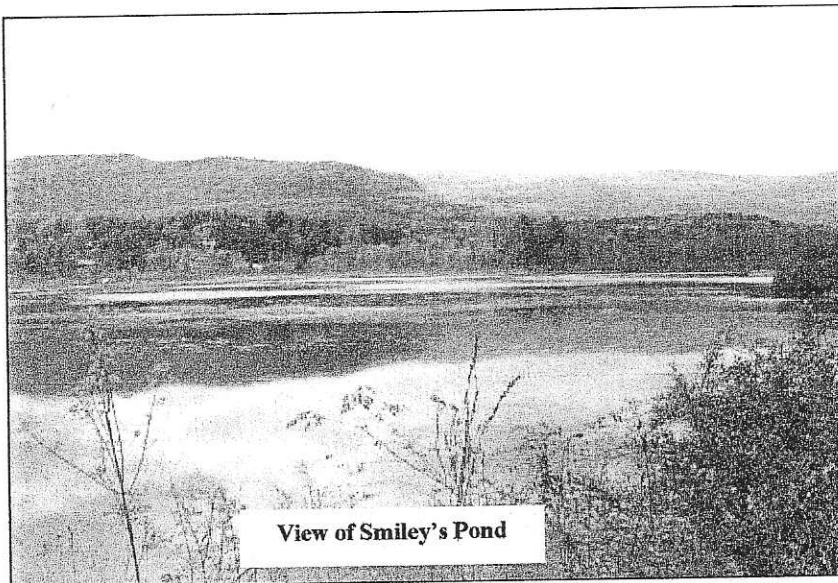
The Town of Egremont is a small, rural community with a rich history and a strong sense of place. The Master Plan is a comprehensive document that outlines the town's vision for the future and provides a framework for decision-making. It is a living document that will be updated as the town's needs and circumstances change. The Master Plan is a key tool for ensuring that the town's growth is sustainable and that its unique character is preserved. It is a document that reflects the town's values and priorities and provides a clear path forward for the community.

## I. Introduction

### A. Town of Egremont



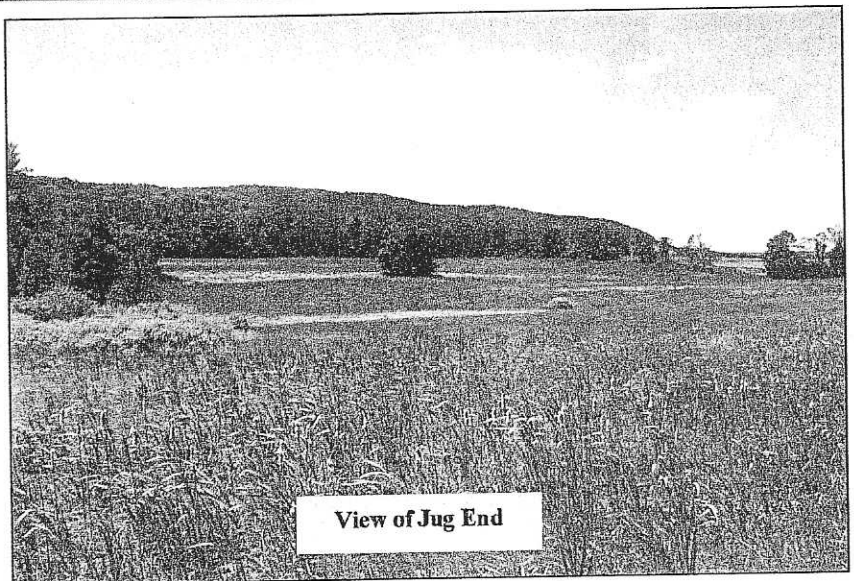
The Town of Egremont incorporated in 1775, encompasses 18.87 square miles and is located in the southwest section of the state and Berkshire County (See Map 1). Egremont remains a relatively small and stable community with a strong contingent of long time residents and families as well as a significant number of seasonal, part-time and newer residents. While Egremont shares many characteristics with neighboring towns, it stands apart due to its agricultural attributes and rural character, accented by its dual villages.



View of Smiley's Pond

Egremont still retains much of its unique environment full of natural beauty. Forested areas such as Jug End Mountain, extensive agricultural lands including Baldwin Hill, scenic roads, and critical watershed and wetlands habitat resources such as Karner Brook are highly treasured by residents. In the last decade a great deal has been accomplished toward the protection and management of environmental resources and open spaces, spearheaded by both local and regional organizations.

Egremont is entering an important phase of its town development. The Town seeks to protect its drinking water supplies, conserve open space, allow only appropriate business ventures in its villages and provide residents with high quality services. It should be noted that the predominant feeling of the residents of Egremont is one of satisfaction with the Town as it is. However, the residents do feel that change is inevitable and without a current comprehensive plan that articulates realistic goals and objectives the town runs the risk of losing its character.



View of Jug End

## **B. Master Planning**

### **1. Process**

Building on the 1976 Land Use Plan and 1988 Growth Management Plan, the Master Plan's purpose is to provide a guide for the town's future that will in turn help town boards and organizations coordinate their decisions and actions over the next five to ten years, and promote changes of local regulations to better reflect the community vision. Toward this end, the Master Plan Steering Committee (the Committee) has solicited public input through community surveys, public planning workshops, and follow-up public presentations and public hearings in order to shape this comprehensive Master Plan (See Appendix E Parts 1-8).

The Master Plan and the corresponding Open Space Plan process are being completed in conjunction with the Town of Mount Washington. Collaborative efforts provide for an enhanced regional approach and understanding since many resources and solutions cross town boundaries. Further, common tools can assist both communities in their pursuit of retaining and preserving community character and sensitive environments.

### **2. Plan Document**

The Master Plan is a collection of documents, data, maps and community wishes on how best to address current and future conditions in the town in order to ensure that any changes be in an orderly and appropriate manner. Most important is that the planning process itself allows the Planning Board and the Town to look at itself, to assess its present situation, and then make hard decisions about how it wants to grow and meet the challenges of the future. Its value lies in seeing that both public and private decisions are coordinated toward the same ends for the benefit of the community.

The Egremont Master Plan in its entirety is detailed in the pages that follow this introduction. It is divided into ten chapters in an order that does not reflect their relative importance. Each chapter is designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the community's strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses. At the end of each chapter, the Egremont Master Plan Steering Committee outlines goals and objectives to preserve, promote and maintain the tenets of the chapter. These goals and objectives provide the foundation for which the Committee suggests immediate, priority, secondary and on-going action strategies in Section X. A full list of all goals, objectives and suggested action strategies can be found in Appendix A.

## **C. Project Goals and Community Vision**

The goals of this project as outlined in the grant application to the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs are:

- To develop up-to-date community master plans and open space/recreation plans for both Egremont and Mount Washington which address pertinent growth management, environmental, economic and community character concerns;
- To develop a sub-regional growth policy plan, based on both town planning efforts, the Regional Plan for the Berkshires and supporting memoranda of agreement among these communities, adjoining



communities, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) regarding developments of regional interests and areas of critical planning concern.

The process of working toward achieving the above goals began with the creation of a town-wide vision. This vision guides the entire comprehensive planning process. The Committee actively and frequently solicited the opinions, comments, and suggestions of all town residents and property owners. A short survey was distributed to taxpayers (over 900 persons) with an enclosed return envelope. Of those who received the survey nearly 42% returned theirs completed. The return rate is one of the highest in the region for Master Plan survey responses.

Nearly 30% of respondents had lived in Egremont for more than 30 years and most had no plans to move within the next 5 years. The largest age group to respond was between 45 to 54 years of age. A community forum and three smaller forum sessions addressing issues specific to the North Village, South Village and rural areas were conducted during the development process. Further public input was sought following completion of the draft plan.

### **Egremont's Community Vision**

For the future, as a Town, we are committed to:

- *Preserving our rural Berkshire character and our rich natural and cultural heritage;*
- *Protecting our historic villages with their residences and small scale businesses;*
- *Acting with foresight so as to sustain these qualities for future generations.*

Throughout the recent planning process the Town of Egremont has stayed focused on its vision. This vision is the driving factor that served as the basis for the goals and objectives of this plan. The Master Plan is advisory and does not impose additional requirements or regulations on the town. The Master Plan can provide a basis for future regulatory changes that are desired by the community. The Planning Board adopts the Plan by a majority vote after a presentation to the town at an information meeting and a public hearing. All subsequent regulatory proceedings, such as a zoning amendment, must be adopted by Town Meeting vote.

## **D. Summary of Plan Findings**

Egremont currently has 1,345 full-time residents, representing 4.5% of the southern Berkshire area's total population. Despite a minor decline in the 1990's, Egremont's population continues to increase slowly but steadily, in part as a result of the town's attractiveness, scenic beauty, relative proximity to major metropolitan areas and desirability as a second home and retirement community. The Regional Economic Model (REMI) projects that the town's population will increase to nearly 1,610 by 2020.

Since its inception in the Colonial era, Egremont has evolved as a typical New England town but with two village centers. Historic structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries dominate the north and south villages and the Egremont Plain area. The South Egremont village was declared a National Historic District in 1984 while North Egremont village was so named in 1989. This designation however, does not guarantee preservation of these historic areas. Removing or altering these historic structures may prove to be a detriment to the defining character of the Town of Egremont and, specifically, its village areas.



Egremont's town government consists of an elected three-member Selectboard and an Open Town Meeting. In FY2001, property taxes, excise and other taxes, service fees, licenses, and state and federal transfer payments combined to fund all municipal functions. Currently, the residential property tax combined with the personal property tax (a tax assessed on second homes) accounts for nearly 75% of the total town revenues.

The total number of full time households has increased nearly 20% since 1990. In addition, the number of second home households has increased nearly 25% since 1995, accounting for nearly a third of the total households. While the number of households has increased, the number of persons per household has continued to drop. This in turn has resulted in a net increase in the number of persons per square mile from 65 in 1990 to 72 in 2000.

Housing in Egremont is much less expensive than in Boston, Hartford, and most importantly the New York City metropolitan area. However, those areas have much higher income levels than Western Massachusetts. The increasing cost of housing coupled with a strong demand for housing can have serious consequences for residents of moderate means in a small town like Egremont.

When considering the possibility of future growth in Egremont, the challenge for the town is to determine how it can guide the quantity and patterns of development in ways that are acceptable to the community, preserve historic and natural resources, and are fiscally responsible.

The community survey results show that the respondents desire to preserve farmland, open space, forested areas and sensitive resources to maintain the current conditions in Egremont. It is clear that there is a potential municipal fiscal impact and land use conflict with the increase of new housing units.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 280 jobs exist in the Town of Egremont. Of the 748 employed persons of Egremont, most are traveling into Great Barrington, which provides the greatest employment base for Egremont residents. Of the total number of employed residents of Egremont, the majority work in management, professional trades, retail trade, and personal and professional service occupations. Additionally, with the increased use of the Internet and telecommuting, the number of those working from home has increased to 11% of employed persons.

The major routes in Egremont include Route 41, Route 23 that runs east/west from New York state to Great Barrington, and Route 71 that runs northwest/southeast from Alford to Route 23 in Great Barrington. Rte. 23 in South Egremont Village is a major access road serving New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts towns, including Mt. Washington. Many people in the Town of Egremont have long been concerned with the volume of seasonal traffic, truck traffic and excess speed in the village areas and on the more rural roads.

The Town already has an extensive inventory of protected open space, including many acres under State and Federal ownership, either as part of the Jug End State Reservation and Wildlife Management Area or the Appalachian Trail Corridor. Multiple non-profit organizations own and/or manage other protected parcels. The Town of Egremont owns French Park, a 147-acre public park, and other conservation land. Other parcels are in agricultural protection through Chapter 61A or conservation restrictions.

Many treasured spots are unprotected or in temporary protection (i.e. state designated chapter lands). The protection and management of Egremont's open spaces can continue to evolve to protect wildlife habitat and natural resources, provide recreational activities that respect their natural surroundings, maintain scenic views, and preserve Egremont's rural character.

Egremont has numerous water resources, including lakes, streams, wetlands, and marshes. One major body of water is Prospect Lake, which has a fairly extensive private seasonal development on its western shore. There are documented water quality problems with this Lake. Other bodies of water of note are Smiley's Pond, Marsh Pond, and Harmon Marsh Pond. Two important rivers flow through Egremont. Karner Brook is located in the southwestern corner of Egremont and serves as the water supply for South Egremont Village. The Karner Brook watershed has state designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Green River aquifer serves as the water supply for Great Barrington and is considered one of the cleanest rivers in Berkshire County. Wetlands in Egremont extend south and west of Marsh Pond, and include much of the lower Fenton and Karner Brooks watersheds and all along Hubbard Brook. Generally, these wetlands are all interconnected from Prospect Lake south into Sheffield.

Many of Egremont's soils present limitations to development, either because they are on steep slopes, are shallow to bedrock, or are otherwise unsuitable for septic fields. Several areas throughout Egremont have been classified as prime agricultural lands due to their soil types. They are level, mostly well-drained, free of stones, and usually free of tree cover. These elements are also characteristics that make areas more appealing to developers.

Soils and water resources are significant factors affecting the future development of the central and northern parts of town while steep slopes and sensitive environmental areas are major factors in the southern part of town. These factors make much of Egremont's terrain questionable for development and results in premium costs for development and acquisition of buildable land. Increasingly, new development may be attempted on marginal lots. Egremont is thus faced with difficult decisions regarding how to direct new growth, while at the same time preserving farmland and open space.

Egremont is fortunate to still have a great deal of land in a natural, passive or cultivated state with nearly 89% of all land either forested, undeveloped or used for open space and agricultural purposes according to the University of Massachusetts 1999 survey of land use. Much of the land that was once forested or in agricultural use has been converted to single family use, either full-time or seasonal.

The recent Build-out analysis showed that after considering developed land, protected open space, known wetlands, steep slopes and other constraints, the Town of Egremont has approximately 5,957 acres of potentially developable land, which is nearly 50% of the total land area in town. If developed under current zoning regulations this area could support an additional 11,000 residents.

Egremont's zoning bylaws and other land use regulations have helped to curb potentially detrimental impacts from development. However, to accomplish the vision of Egremont residents for the future, Egremont's Bylaws will need a comprehensive review.

Under the present zoning regulations, development is occurring in a medium-low density sprawl-like form, which has been and still is resulting in the permanent loss of farmlands, open space and scenic resources - the very qualities which give Egremont its distinctive character. Preservation of environmentally and esthetically sensitive areas is key to the future of Egremont. Continued development will undoubtedly occur due to the attractiveness of the Town. If development continues in a manner similar to what has taken place in recent years, it will result in increased taxes, decreased access to outdoor recreational opportunities, and a loss of the rural character.

A growth management strategy involves further protection of fragile and important natural resource areas, designation of areas where development should be restricted, and areas where reuse or redevelopment might occur at appropriate densities.

In an effort to address their many similar issues, the towns of Egremont and Mt. Washington have cooperated to create Open Space and Master Plans in each community. Initial interest for developing these plans arose from the need to investigate specific issues along joint borders, particularly the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, the shared mountain areas, viewsheds and watersheds. During the process, this relationship has spurred the realization that many other players must also be consulted when discussing such issues (i.e. New York, Alford, Sheffield, Great Barrington, and others).

The ultimate goal of this project is to build consensus at the town and regional levels on how best to achieve a sustainable future for this area. To be sustainable, this future must be sensitive to the environmental, community character, and economic base of the communities. Through an on-going joint process, the towns hope to have a clear identification of issues and consensus on visions for the future of these towns, individually and collectively.



## II. A Glimpse Inside Egremont

### A. Community Setting

Egremont's location on the boundary between Massachusetts and New York brought in Hudson Valley Dutch as its first European settlers. In the 1730's, colonists from Massachusetts and Connecticut joined them. Egremont was set aside as a separate district of Sheffield in 1760, and named after the Earl of Egremont, a British politician whose responsibilities included the colonies. In 1775, Egremont was incorporated as a town.

By 1800, Egremont was a flourishing agricultural community with grist mills, saw mills, and cider mills on its various brooks. Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist churches and eight taverns also existed at this time. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of the North and South villages; the Baptist and Methodist churches were built in North Egremont, and the Congregational church left its original site on Town House Hill, near the center of town, moving to the South Village in 1833. The Academy was opened in the same village in 1832; the building is still in use as the town archives and library. Through the century, the town maintained four or five school districts. The South Egremont schoolhouse, built in 1854, is still in use within the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.



Pastoral view toward Mt. Washington

Industry also developed after 1800, especially in South Egremont. By 1850, Charles Goodale was making boots and shoes, sold as far away as Canada, and quarrying marble. Not long thereafter, the Baldwin Chair Factory became known for the Baldwin Chair; Arthur Benjamin's Cork Insole Factory was one of the first to make standard sizes; and the Dalzell Axle Works, using local Salisbury Iron, was selling its products to carriage makers throughout New England and New York. Shortly after 1900, it was making axles for automobiles. The foundations of the factory buildings, the office building, and workmen's housing, remain at the west end of the village.

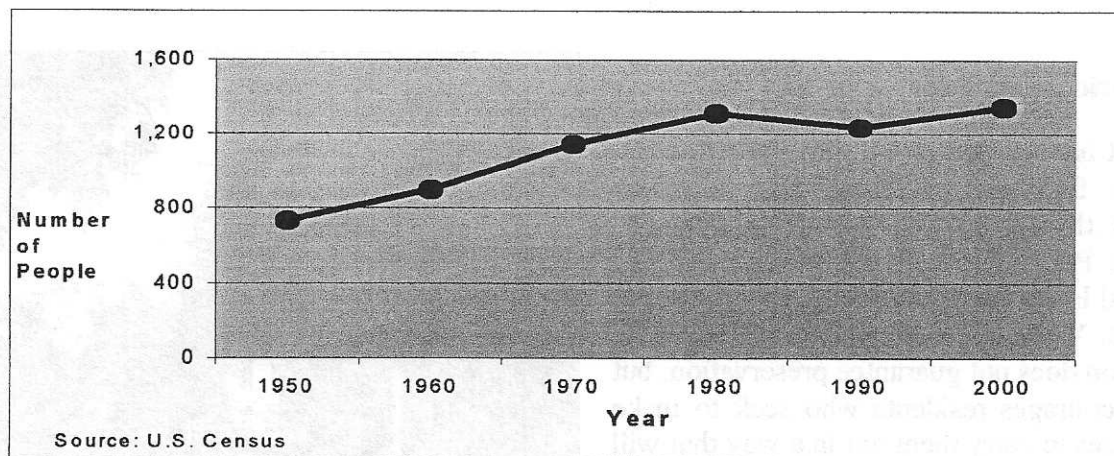
By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the town's economy had changed. The early industries disappeared, many small dairy farms were abandoned and open land began to decline. However, tourism, already strong in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prospered. Antique shops, restaurants, inns, and lodging houses became established in both village centers. In addition, the Town became and continues to be a popular second home location and has residents moving in from more urban areas.

## B. Population and Demographics<sup>1</sup>

Like the rest of South County, Egremont's year-round population has slightly increased since the 1990 U.S. Census<sup>2</sup>. The 2000 Census indicates that while Mount Washington lost a small amount of population (-3.7%) Egremont had a 9.4% increase. The neighboring town of Sheffield gained nearly 18% in population. As demonstrated in Table 1, Egremont's population continues to increase slightly most decades.

The middle range Regional Economic Model (REMI) forecast indicates that Egremont's population (1998 US Census estimate 1,226) will grow to 1,420 persons by 2010, and continue to grow in the following decades. The middle population projection is 1,610 for year 2020.

**TABLE 1 – Population Change**



Egremont's current population at 1,345 comprises 4.5% of South Berkshire County's population of approximately 29,700 people. The Annual Town Census, taken each January, has traditionally produced a lower population figure than the U.S. Census, which may reflect a lower population present in town in the winter. The 2000 Town Census calculated the town population to be only 1,095<sup>3</sup> persons.

The demand potential for growth exists according to national and regional growth projections (including a projected reversal of the recent trend of declining population in the Berkshires) and demand generated by Egremont's desirability as a retirement location.

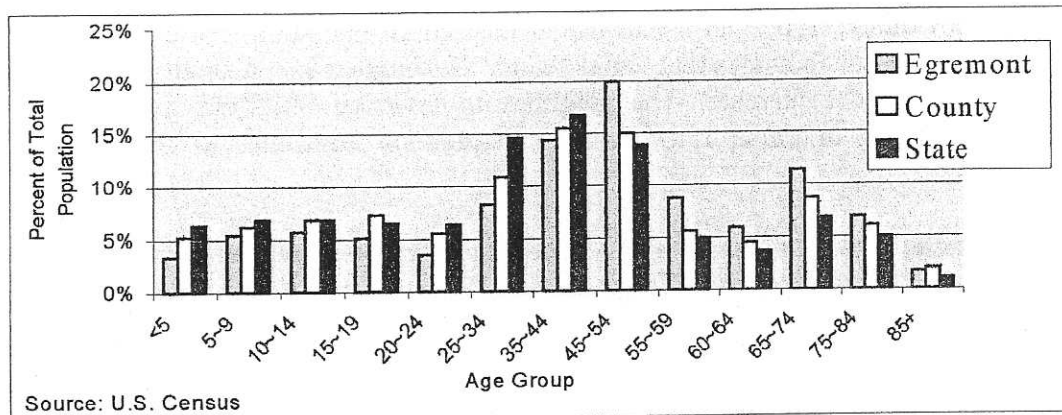
Egremont continues to experience changes to its demographic composition. The median age rose from 35.5 in 1980 to 40 in 1990 to over 47 in 2000 (see Table 2). This is considerably higher than the state and county median, but not unusual for towns in the south Berkshires.

Relative to state and national averages, there are larger than average numbers of elderly singles and married couples without children, and smaller numbers of young adults. The 18-21 year range is particularly underrepresented in the Berkshires and Egremont. The proportion of town population under age 18 fell from 25.1% in 1980 to 18.3% in 2000.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, data is 2000 U.S. Census figures and full-time residents only

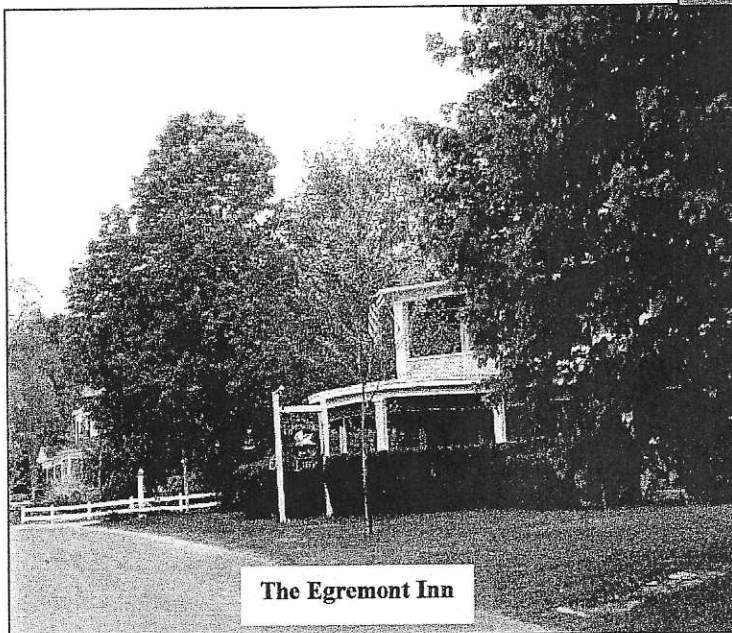
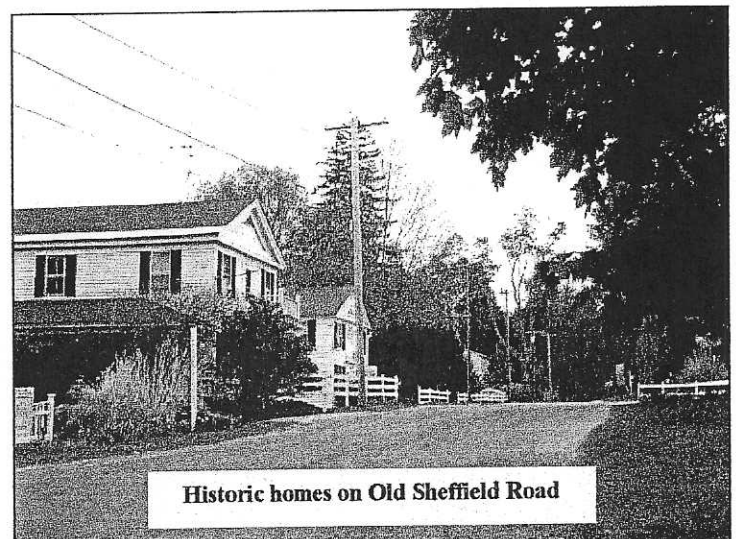
<sup>3</sup> 2000 Town Census.



**TABLE 2 – Demographic Comparison**

### C. Historic Resources

Egremont has a multitude of historic resources. Buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries dominate the North and South Villages and Egremont Plain. South Egremont was declared a National Historic District in 1984 while North Egremont Village was named in 1989. This designation does not guarantee preservation, but rather encourages residents who seek to make any changes to carry them out in a way that will preserve the historic integrity of the structure as well as the overall character of the villages.



While significant historic and cultural resources exist in the villages others also are present in the more rural areas. One of the oldest houses in town, the Westover-Bacon-Potts House (1744), also known as April Hill, is located on Route 41. Agricultural lands, such as the open country at the top of Baldwin Hill are an historic as well as a scenic resource, giving a sense of the landscape when the town was almost all open and un-forested. At one time, Indian mounds and burial sites existed along the Green River and Jug End Road. Unfortunately, these are mostly gone. Old Sheffield Road, Creamery Road, and Egremont Plain Road, officially designated as the Kings Highway in 1801, were part of the main road from Albany to Hartford, with stagecoaches often stopping overnight at the

Egremont Inn.

Charcoal pits, remnants of the industry, which for 100 years supplied the local iron industry, can still be found in the mountainous parts of the town, such as Molasses Hill and Jug End.

Historic and cultural resources ideally preserve the best aspects of the past while striving to maintain their relevance to current and future situations. Residents, town leaders, and other organizations expressed their desire to save these resources while providing linkages to other activities such as natural resource protection.

## Historic Resources Goals and Objectives

*Preserve and promote protection of historic resources.*

- ❖ In addition to historic properties, preserve the historic context and scale of the community.
- ❖ Investigate ways of preserving historic buildings in their historic locations.
- ❖ Encourage any new development to be consistent with surrounding historic character.
- ❖ Create a guide to historic properties and make it available to the public.

### III. Public Facilities & Fiscal Conditions

#### A. Town Offices

Until the mid 1980's the Egremont Free Library building in South Egremont served as the Town Hall. The current Town Hall located in North Egremont on Route 71 was erected in 1962 as a private boys school. The building houses about ten town departments and provides two meeting rooms. The condition of the Town Hall is fair. Only minor renovations and repairs have been made over the years. The first floor of the building is handicapped accessible but not the second. Another building, probably formerly a dormitory for the school, is now used for storage. The condition of the building is good.

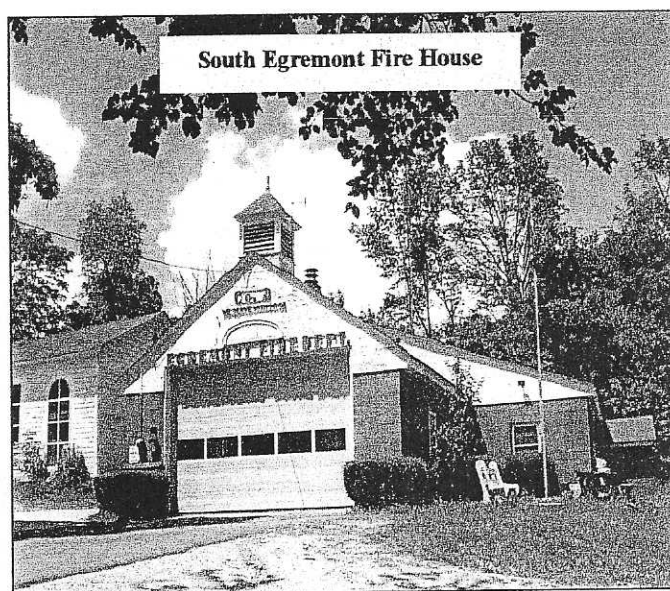
#### B. Police & Fire

The Egremont Police Department (EPD) shares the Town Office building in North Egremont. The Chief of Police is supported by 2 full-time officers, 6 part-time officers and 2 police cruisers. The EPD was awarded various grants in 1999 to better serve the community through efforts including Community Policing, house-checks, bike patrol, "Cops in Shops", senior visitations, hot-spot patrols, and Drug Abuse Resistance Education. Many of these programs are currently still in operation.

The volunteer Fire Department owns fire stations located in both the south and north village centers. The recently -built north station is situated just west of the Town Offices and has two fire engines, 17 volunteer members, and a large meeting room and kitchen. The south station has 11 volunteer members, two fire engines and an emergency response vehicle. The Egremont Fire Department, Inc. would like to build a new addition to the present firehouse in South Egremont, as the nearly 50-year-old south station is inadequate for present vehicles.

The Town's Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and First Responders work closely with the Fairview Hospital ambulance crews to stabilize patients awaiting transport to hospital facilities. A recent project addressed the need to supply each addressee with a proper 911 address in order to improve emergency response times. For this purpose, new 911 road signs were recently installed throughout the town.

The Egremont Police and Fire Departments are often requested to respond to emergencies in abutting towns. The Town of Mt. Washington calls on the Egremont Fire Department in all situations that require





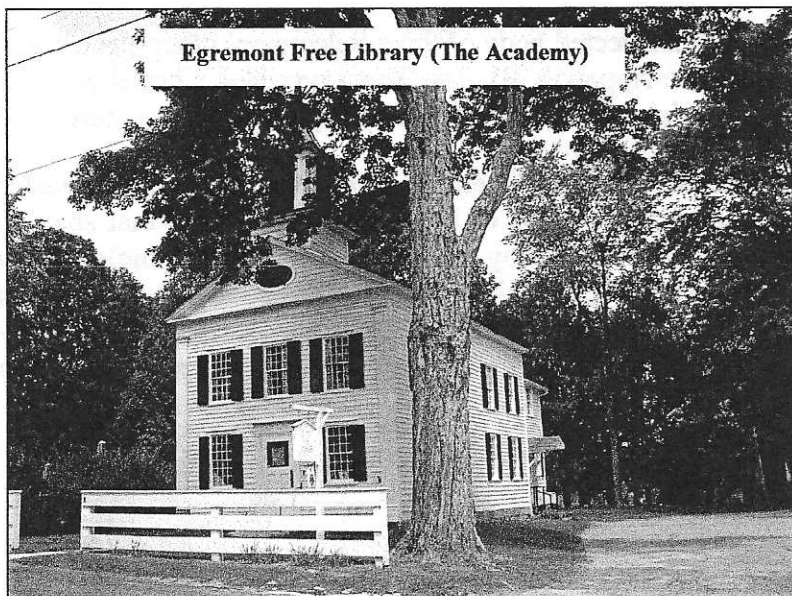
fire protection. Additionally, while Egremont's police do not have jurisdiction in abutting towns they will often respond to calls and secure the scene until state police or local police officials answer. To best serve the Town of Egremont's residents as well as provide reliable service in other towns as needed, it is imperative that the Town evaluate its spending compared to service provided. Egremont's continued ability to provide emergency services to Mt. Washington, while still meeting Egremont's needs may depend on fair compensation from Mt. Washington.

### C. Highway Garage/Transfer Station/Recycling Center

Egremont has a fairly new highway garage for storage of its highway equipment, located on a hillside behind the town hall. Adjacent to that is the transfer station and recycling center, open to all residents of Egremont four days a week. In recent years, Egremont has been commended by the state for the high percentage of waste that is recycled in town.

### D. Education and Learning

Egremont is a member of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) which also includes the towns of Alford, Monterey, New Marlborough, and Sheffield. Mt. Washington students participate on a tuition basis. The SBRSD offers kindergarten through twelfth grade to Egremont residents and other SBRSD member communities. Egremont's student enrollment in 1980 was 208 students, dropping to 145 students in year 2000. While the number of pupils has decreased the average per pupil expenditure has risen. In 1993-4 the average expenditure was \$6,403 compared to \$7,680<sup>4</sup> in FY 1999. Of the several one-room schoolhouses historically located in Egremont, only the South Egremont School remains in use, currently as a kindergarten and grade 1 classroom.



The Egremont Free Library (formerly known as the Academy) is a significant asset to the community. Open to all Massachusetts residents, it is located in South Egremont in an historic building erected in 1830 that had served as the former Town Hall. The second story houses the town's Archives and Historical Room. The Western Mass Regional Library System Bookmobile supplements holdings on a regular basis, and the library continues to work closely with the Egremont School for visits and story hours. Funded through Town of Egremont appropriations and state aid, holdings of up-to-date works continue to grow, while book donations broaden the

overall depth and quality of reserves. Currently, the library contains over 9,100 books. The library is not fully handicap accessible and current space is completely occupied.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education.

## E. Water & Sewer

In the late 1990's, the town acquired the former So. Egremont Water Company, a private company established in 1904 for the purposes of serving the South Village and neighboring areas. A newly-constructed water filtration plant has been in operation since February 2000. With a 2-day capacity of 200,000 gallons, it is a private resource that serves 211 properties on the water system. Nearly 190 (approximately 90%) of those properties are residences, serving close to 700 townspeople in both Egremont and Great Barrington. In 2001, the Water Commissioners replaced pipelines in the South Egremont area.

The total cost of the project was \$4.7 million, which included the installation and replacement of water main and lines and the installation of meters to current residents. The project was paid for through grants and loans from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration, 25% of which is a 40-year loan at a 3.8% fixed rate interest paid for by water users on a meter basis.

Under the authority of the Board of Health (BOH), many septic plan reviews and analyses, site and field inspections and Title V inspections were conducted in 2000. Much of the BOH work is in collaboration with the Massachusetts departments of Environmental Protection and Public Health, the Tri-Town Health Department and the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association.

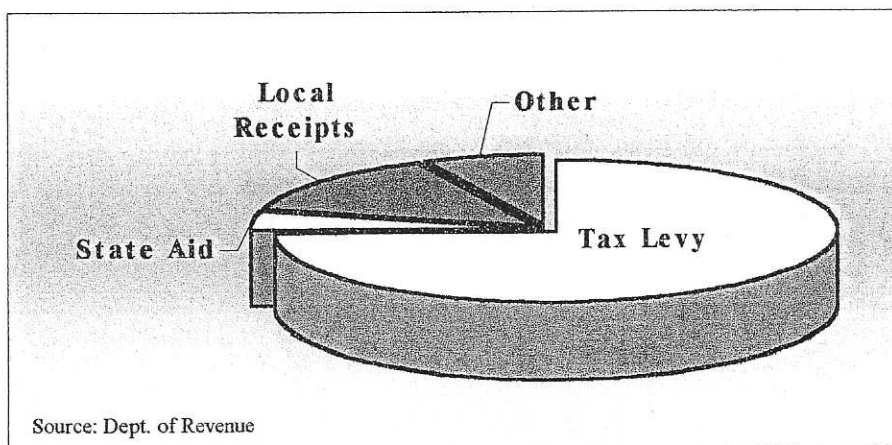
The single-most urgent issue for the BOH is to assure safe waste water disposal in areas where small lots, poor soil conditions, and proximity to rivers and wetlands restrict effective waste water management. There needs to be an in-depth study of the extent of the problem and possible solutions.

## F. Fiscal Conditions

Egremont has a Town Meeting form of government, an elected body of three Selectmen, other elected and appointed officials, and boards and commissions (See Appendix B). The Town provides a broad array of services and facilities to residents, including the provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure.

Currently property taxes, excise and other taxes, service fees, licenses, and state and federal transfer payments fund all municipal functions. In FY01, the Department of Revenue released data that showed 680 single-family parcels, with an average assessed value of nearly \$235,000. The average single-family tax bill of \$2,207 was down from \$2,218 per property in FY98. This may be due to the revaluation, which increased assessed values while decreasing the tax rate to \$9.38. In FY01, the residential tax levy accounted for nearly 68% of the town's total revenues. Personal property and commercial levies accounted for 1.9% and 3.8% respectively.

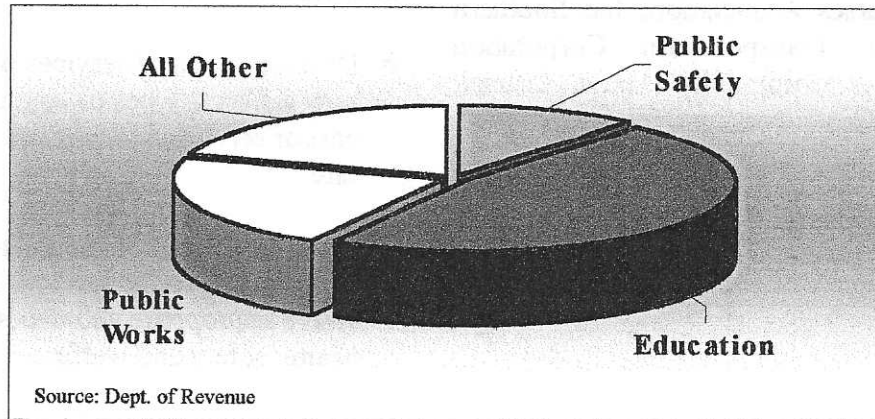
**Table 3 – FY01 Revenues**





General fund expenditures for FY 1998 were \$2,874,548. In FY 2000, they had dropped to \$2,485,759. As was true for the majority of Berkshire County municipalities, the largest General Fund operating expense was directed toward public education (47% of the total budget).

**Table 4 – FY01 Expenditures**



While a large percent of homeowners in Egremont are seasonal residents and currently don't demand school uses, it is not clear what future demands will be. In only one year educational spending increased 7% while student numbers continue to decline. As such, a detailed analysis is needed to determine how the town has traditionally spent funds, whether there could be more efficient means of spending and what impacts are going to affect future spending patterns, such as second homes converting to year-round housing.

Each year the Selectboard and the Finance Committee work diligently to prepare the annual budget. The process includes individual budget submittals from each of the town boards and commissions, which are then reviewed and approved for town meeting vote. At present, there is no community-wide plan that outlines a long-range capital planning process. The Town's budget is currently solvent; however, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to determining the annual budget in relation to medium and long-term planning.

To some extent, the cost of services is also linked to the location and patterns of development. Net public cost for a low density residential community is higher than for a comparable but compact development due to inefficient expenditures for public school operational, instructional, and transportation services, and also because sprawl creates potentially higher public liabilities for road maintenance and future provision of public water and sewer. However, many of the costs of sprawl are largely borne at the state and federal level.

## G. Non-Municipal Community Services

As part of the community's efforts to provide a high level of quality of life many private, non-municipal, and state institutions offer services and support to Egremont residents. Of particular benefit is the Visiting Nurses Association, the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC), Berkshire Community Action Council and the Children's Heath Program, Inc.

### Public Facilities & Fiscal Conditions Goal and Objectives

*Maintain adequate and cost-effective Town facilities and services.*

- ❖ Develop a cost of services plan that shows how different types of land uses affect the cost of services in town and therefore the tax rate.
- ❖ Provide for orderly and cost-effective repair, replacement and extensions to facilities where appropriate and necessary for public health, safety and welfare.
- ❖ Pursue funding sources to assist the Town with repairs, upgrades and new construction of community services and facilities.

## IV. Housing Supply and Cost

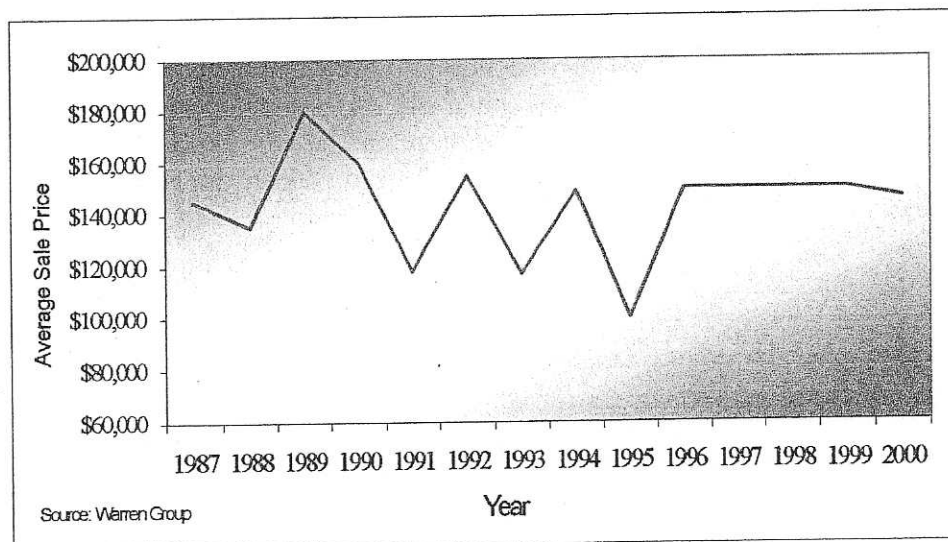
### A. Housing Trends

In Egremont and the southern Berkshires in general, demand for housing has been increased by people living in metropolitan areas who buy land and existing houses for part-time homes. As a result of these pressures, Egremont is facing a housing dilemma as homes quickly turn over at increasingly higher costs. In addition, the demand has resulted in new construction on large lots historically occupied by farming, forest or open space in the more rural areas of the town.

Location and appearance of new construction appears to be as pressing a concern to the community as quantity is. There has been little construction of new buildings in the village centers of North and South Egremont. Rather, many older houses are being renovated and some committed to commercial use. Most new dwellings and development are appearing along state and town roads, in wooded and open lots. New driveways are also opening up forest and other remote lands for development.<sup>5</sup>

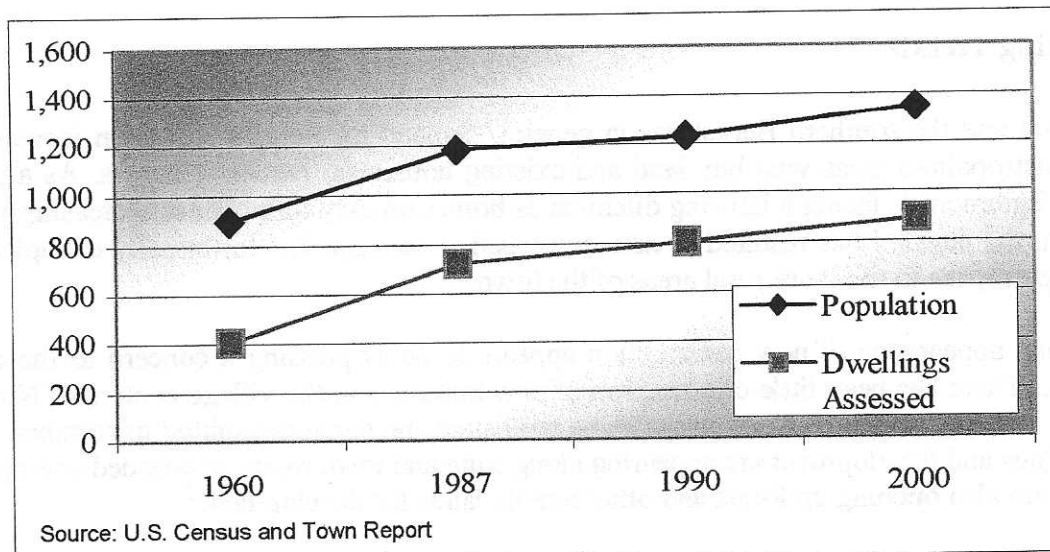
Housing in Egremont is not expensive when compared to Boston, Hartford, and most importantly, the New York metropolitan area. According to the Warren Group, a private housing consulting firm, the average cost for a home in Egremont has fluctuated since the late 1980's but currently remains stable (see Table 5). Moreover, these areas have a much higher average income level than Berkshire County.

**TABLE 5 – Average Housing Prices in Egremont**



What this means is that housing in Egremont is attractive to the vast and wealthy urban market. This influx of dollars into the local and sub-regional housing market is raising overall real estate prices, while creating an affordability challenge to many longtime town residents and families. In some instances a crisis occurs when long-term residents cannot meet the cost of living in the area with current income levels and are forced out of the community. This releases more housing onto the market for which buyers are willing to pay higher prices forcing other buyers and sellers into a higher cost housing market.

<sup>5</sup> Egremont Open Space & Recreation Plan, 1988.

**TABLE 6 – Population vs. Housing Units**

As with other south Berkshire County communities, Egremont continues to experience a steady increase in housing construction, with an average of 7 new full-time units constructed annually in the past decade. The growth of new housing units is nearly double that of the early 1960's. In contrast, Egremont's full-time population has only increased 33% during the same time period (see Table 6).

Of the nearly 870 housing units in Egremont, almost 280 are second home, seasonal, or occasional use units. Since 1990, 36 new seasonal or second homes have been constructed. While Egremont has experienced a healthy second home market, the town did experience a slight decline (2%) in seasonal homes between 1990 and 2000. This could be because of the conversion from seasonal to full-time occupancy of homes. Single family detached homes increased slightly during that time period from 87% to 91%. The number of rental units has remained relatively the same over the past two decades.

While the number of homes has increased, the average number of persons per home is declining. In 1970, the number of people per household averaged 2.76; it fell to 2.65 in 1980, 2.39 in 1990 and 2.21 in 2000. This is slightly lower than the county average household size of 2.30 and the state average of 2.51. Nearly 200 homes or approximately one third (32%) of the total number of full-time household units in town include individuals 65 years or older. Compared to the county at 30.1% and the state at 24.7%, Egremont has a noticeably older resident population. This housing factor may have significant impacts on the short and long-term housing trends and market.

## **B. Impacts of Housing Pressures**

The increased cost of housing coupled with a strong demand for housing can have serious consequences for residents of moderate means in a small town like Egremont. Over time as prices continue to rise, it becomes more and more difficult for families to stay, newly married couples to own homes, or for seniors to join the community. In some cases, the continued rise in home (and rental) prices acts as an exclusionary force limiting the diversification of the community. In Egremont only 1.6% of the total units

are available for rental housing and the average cost of a home is \$200,000, compared to the \$119,000 county-wide average.

In addition, it is clear that there is a potential land use conflict as Egremont tries to preserve farmland, open space, forested areas and sensitive resources while full-time, second home and seasonal residence construction is on the rise. The conflict occurs when open space and rich farmland, the best in the Berkshire county, is sacrificed for large lot development with little or no consideration for providing protected open space, diminishing the town's traditional rural character.

As new home construction continues and the availability of easily-developable land diminishes, environmentally-sensitive lands will come under increasing development pressure. Action by the town and its community leaders to determine the best case scenario for appropriate growth is essential for the continued preservation of sensitive resources and the provision of housing for Egremont residents of all income levels. In order to achieve this desired balance, the Town's zoning bylaws may need to be updated.

## Housing Goal and Objective

*Allow a variety of housing options that meet the needs of Egremont residents, are in scale with community character, and minimize the effects of growth in the town.*

Appoint an Egremont Housing Committee to:

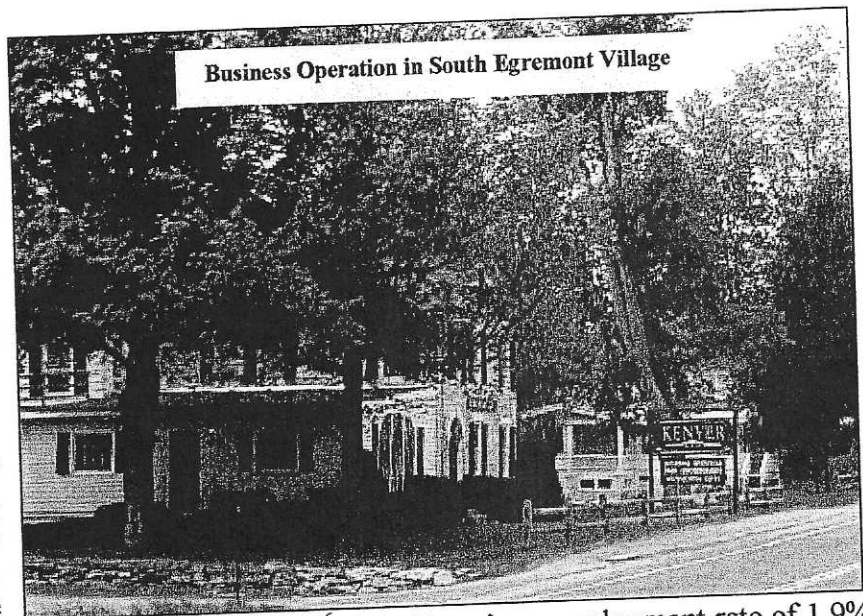
- ❖ Conduct an in-depth housing needs inventory showing the availability of housing for Egremont residents of all income levels.
- ❖ Investigate opportunities to meet the needs of Egremont residents with a variety of housing options.
- ❖ Investigate possibility of senior housing, including the conversion of large houses in villages to senior housing for Egremont residents.
- ❖ In open space areas, especially agricultural areas, develop regulatory tools and incentives to minimize development impacts.



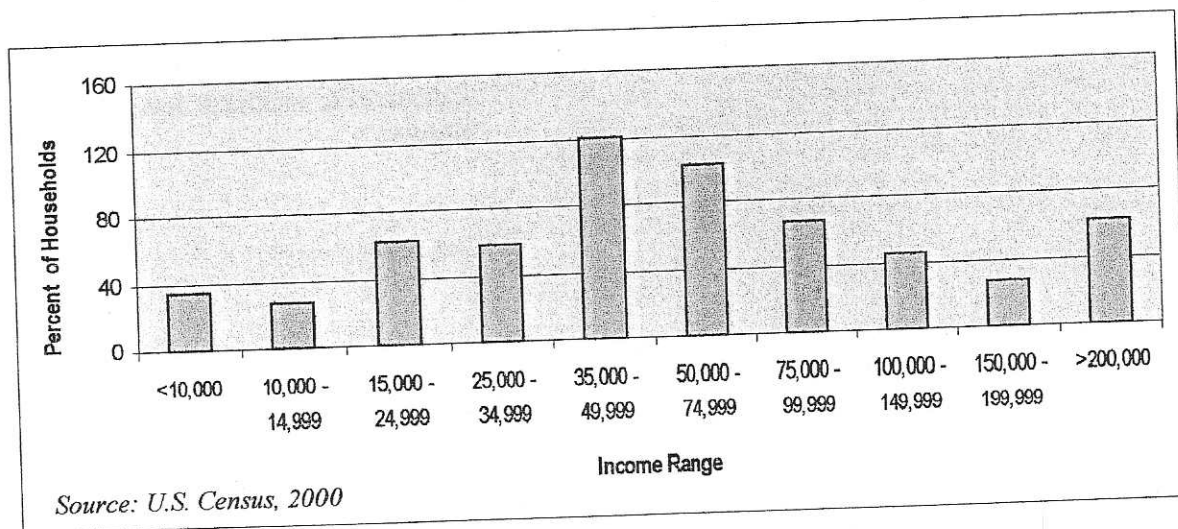
## V. Economic Factors

### A. Rural Economy

The majority of Egremonters work outside of Egremont. As of 1999, approximately 280 jobs existed in the Town of Egremont. The majority of Egremont's employed population (748 persons) works in neighboring Great Barrington or travels to other areas including Sheffield, Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, Dalton, Williamstown and out-of-state for employment. The largest employment sectors include educational, health and social services, arts, entertainment and recreation, and retail trade industries. The median household income rose over \$18,000 from 1990 to 2000, where it is currently \$50,000<sup>6</sup>. The Town's unemployment rate of 1.9% is lower than that of the region by about half.



**TABLE 7 – 2000 Median Household Income Distribution**



By the late 1990's, there were fewer two-income families than in most of Berkshire County, more single-parent and female-headed households and a relatively higher percentage of elderly people on fixed incomes. The Town's unemployment rate of 2.6% is nearly half that of the region's.

Much of Egremont's commercial land use continues to serve tourism. The commercial-recreation providers are Catamount Ski Area, the Egremont Country Club (business in Great Barrington), and Prospect Lake Park camp ground. Over the past 40 years, Egremont has provided a backdrop for thriving

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau.

antique businesses, conducted from houses and barns, directed at summer tourists and the trade. There is an increasing number of outward-looking enterprises located in the villages and along the State roads: shops, boutiques, art galleries, real-estate offices, building contractors, a ski shop, restaurants, and inns and bed-and-breakfast establishments.

Many local businesses address the needs of local residents also, such as health providers, maintenance contractors, small general stores, rental housing, and a bank. Residents have stated that these businesses serving local needs are of special importance and should be continued in the town.

Approximately 11% of Egremont residents conduct small home-based businesses, which are allowed by right under present zoning. These businesses are low-impact and of minimal visibility. Egremont is experiencing an increase in such businesses, with some home businesses focusing on local activities and others telecommuting to serve businesses elsewhere.

Several agricultural enterprises form an important part of Egremont's economy, also contributing to its open space character. These include two major dairy farms, as well as a llama farm, vegetable farms, other small livestock farms with cattle and sheep, egg producers, maple syrup producer, a therapeutic riding stable, and several small sustenance farms. Of particular interest is Indian Line Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise on Jug End Road, supported by shareholders in the area who contribute financially in exchange for sharing in the farm's harvest. This Community Supported Agriculture concept, which has now spread world-wide, had its beginnings right at Indian Line Farm under the innovation of Egremont resident, the late Robyn Van En.

The desire to maintain Egremont's rural character and varied landscape lends itself to sustaining these existing business operations and allowing only those new businesses that are compatible and low-impact. Because there is a desire for local residents to be able to make their livelihood within the town while at the same time there is concern about maintaining the rural and residential character of the area, the town should investigate mechanisms to allow residents to conduct home-based, low-impact businesses which are in keeping with the scale and character of the town. Such a mechanism should include measured impacts which are standardized and approved by townspeople and which do not depend solely on the discretion of town boards. In order to maintain the generally residential character of the community and avoid commercial sprawl, the town should consider mechanisms for maintaining a compatible balance of land uses.

## Economic Factors Goals and Objectives

*Maintain the balance between residential and commercial uses protecting the rural character of the town, avoiding commercial sprawl, and offering appropriate services and conveniences for residents and seasonal visitors.*

- ❖ Continue to limit new commercial development to compatible low-impact agricultural, retail and service-oriented businesses.
- ❖ Provide mechanisms for existing local businesses to remain sustainable as well as opportunities for any new business growth to occur primarily in the villages.
- ❖ In the rural areas outside the villages, develop a mechanism for allowing a limited number of home-based businesses which are low-impact and compatible with the scale and character of the community, to be approved by special permit guided by measured standards.
- ❖ Investigate and define home occupations to be allowed by-right throughout town.
- ❖ As an alternative to conventional growth, investigate incentive mechanisms for preserving large undeveloped parcels from being intensely developed by allowing low impact, low density uses such as high tech business uses and cluster housing, with large buffer areas to insulate their impacts from surrounding users.

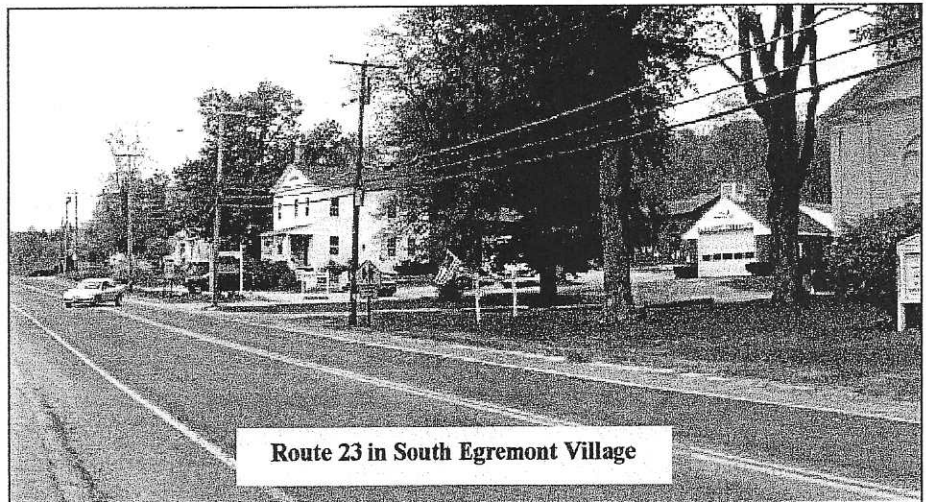
## VI. Transportation & Mobility

### A. In and Around the Town

The Egremont Highway Crew, supervised by the Road Superintendent, is responsible for the care and upkeep of the Town's nearly 41 miles of roadways. A majority of traffic passes through Egremont via Routes 71, 41 and 23 (See Map 2). Many people have long been concerned with the volume of seasonal traffic, truck traffic, and speed present in the village areas, especially in South Egremont (Route 23).

Within the last five years there have been multiple road improvement projects in Egremont. Shoulder and culvert repairs occurred on Route 41 from South Egremont to Sheffield and additional sidewalks were installed in the South Egremont village area. According to the village forums there are concerns that the lack of curbs in some parts of south village often creates chaos among drivers trying to enter and exit shops. In addition, some north Egremont residents expressed a desire to maintain the road through the village in its current state (i.e. no sidewalks) in order to retain its rural character while also ensuring safe pedestrian access in the North Village.

Future village circulation system studies may be required to address the parking and increased congestion at intersections and business outlets. Pedestrian markers may also need to be enhanced in these areas as well. In addition, improved landscaping or other amenities may also be addressed in the village transportation reports as a way to connect the entire length of the villages.



As part of most residential developments, an applicant is required to obtain a curb cut permit for driveway construction. In an effort to better understand the number of requests and location of each of these permits, the Town should investigate standards for all driveway requests in order to reduce traffic hazards and decrease land consumption for unnecessary or excessive driveway construction.

The character of the town is greatly affected by the nature of the roads which wind their way through it and by the land uses along those roads. Egremont's character can best be maintained by keeping its roads appropriate to the scale of the town and by preventing commercial sprawl along the roadways.

According to 2000 data, Egremont has nearly 19.8 miles<sup>7</sup> of unpaved roads, but recent road changes have diminished that figure somewhat. These roads contribute to the rural character of Egremont and should be retained to the greatest extent. However, as new development occurs along unpaved roads the condition of such roads may deteriorate. Proper grading and maintenance of dirt roads extends their usefulness and may be less expensive than paving roadways.

<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Highway, end of 2000 data



Therefore, the town should pay considerable attention to the current and future use of the road and work cooperatively with surrounding towns, including those in New York State, to preserve the condition and character of the roads.

The scenic quality of rural roads attracts a significant number of recreational walkers, bikers, and horseback riders. Sometimes, conflict exists between vehicular traffic, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and farm machinery on the rural roads, and there needs to be recognition that the roads serve many purposes for both residents and visitors alike.

Another transportation option available is air travel. The Great Barrington Airport is located within a few miles of North Egremont Village on Route 71. The Airport provides single and multi-engine charter planes for rental and paid access to runways for public use.

### **Transportation and Mobility Goals and Objectives**

*Protect and preserve the rural character of Egremont's roads, while maintaining a safe, economical, and efficient transportation system suitable to the scale of the Town.*

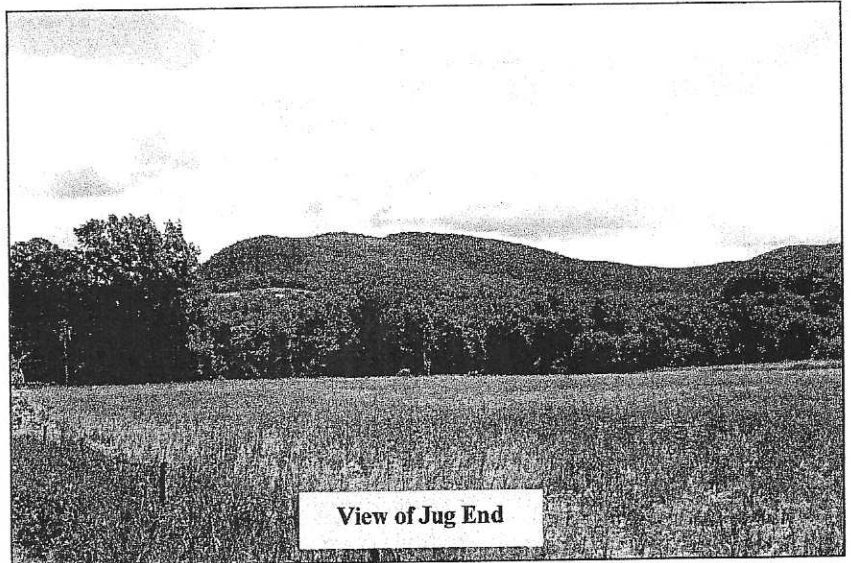
- ❖ Consider long-term infrastructure needs for all transportation modes.
- ❖ Minimize environmental impacts of roadwork and maintenance where possible.
- ❖ Investigate convenient and safe options for traffic flow on rural and village roads.
- ❖ Recognize and encourage the use of main roads for heavy local and through transportation and other roads for lower impact purposes such as local access and recreation.
- ❖ Develop a mechanism for monitoring changes in the towns of Mt. Washington and Alford, the state of New York and other neighboring areas which have their major access through Egremont and which would impact Egremont's roads
- ❖ Investigate criteria for performance standards for all driveways and a bylaw for shared driveways, specifically addressing public safety concerns without promoting more growth in town.



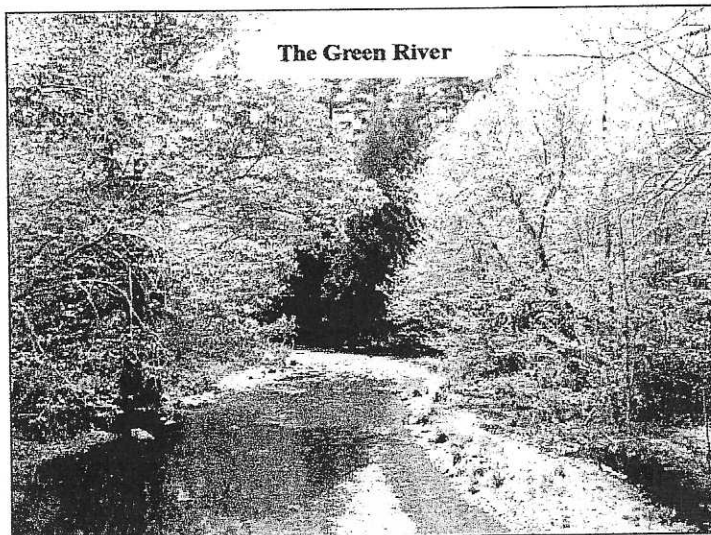
## VII. Natural Resources, Open Space, Watersheds, Recreational Resources

### A. Valuable Resources

Scenic resources abound in Egremont. The distinctive profile of Jug End can be viewed from numerous points in the town. From Baldwin Hill, which lies between North and South Egremont, one can observe an extraordinary 360° view of the surrounding mountain ranges (See Map 3). Although Egremont has an extensive inventory of protected open space (See Map 4), many important places that provide wildlife habitat and water resources as well as scenic views, recreation, and other benefits are not permanently protected.



Open space in Egremont falls into several categories of ownership and protection status. Many properties in Egremont are enrolled in the state's Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B programs as approved by the Department of Revenue, which discourage owners from changing the use of the parcel with property tax incentives but do not permanently protect it. The Baldwin Hill area includes highly productive working farms and other agricultural lands. The scenic vistas of and from the top of Baldwin Hill are some of the most distinctive landscapes in Massachusetts, and are identified as such in *The Massachusetts Landscape Inventory*. Also listed in that Inventory are many scenic farm fields along Undermountain Road in South Egremont; some of these are permanently protected because of their proximity to the Appalachian Trail. Egremont's two major dairy farms, llama farm, vegetable farms and small cattle farms help to keep these and several other smaller agricultural areas as scenic and productive open space. A large commercial ski area on Rte. 23 provides open space in South Egremont along the New York border. (See Map 4).



In 1997, roughly 59% of the land in Egremont was forested. Most of this is in the upland regions and in forested wetlands. The Town of Egremont owns several properties, including the extensive French Park; however, these are not all permanently protected against development.

Egremont has numerous water resources, including lakes, streams, wetlands, and marshes. One body of water of particular importance is Prospect Lake, which has fairly extensive private seasonal development on its western shore. There may be some problems with septic systems from this development contaminating the Lake.

Other water bodies of note are Smiley's Pond, Marsh Pond, and Harmon Marsh Pond. Karner Brook, which serves as the Egremont Water Company water supply is one of two important rivers flowing through Egremont. Part of the Karner Brook State-designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is located in the southwest corner of Egremont. The other major flowing body of water in Egremont is the Green River, which serves as Great Barrington's water supply. Wetlands in Egremont extend north and west of Marsh Pond, and include much of the lower Fenton and Karner Brooks watersheds. Wetland types include marshes, scrub-shrub swamps, tree swamps, and calcareous fens. Calcareous fens such as Jug End Fen are home to many rare species of plants.

Egremont has a rich diversity of wildlife (See Map 6), both in upland areas and wetlands. The Town's woodlands and wetlands provide habitat to 15 species of plants and animals on the State's List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern species. A notable species of the upland areas, especially Jug End, is the timber rattlesnake, which is listed as an endangered species in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## B. Continued Protection

State and Federal lands owned and managed by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement (DFWELE), or National Park Service are considered permanently protected. Non-profit conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the Egremont Land Trust, the Appalachian Trail Conference, and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council have worked to protect land by purchasing it as a preserve and/or holding and monitoring conservation restrictions on private properties.

In the twelve years since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed, the Town has faced increasing development pressures, without a framework to preserve the characteristics that contribute to its current high quality of life. It is the intent of the concurrent Master and Open Space and Recreation Plan process to document the Town's natural assets and the needs of its community, and to help direct development in a fashion that respects the character of the community and the environment.

High real estate values may entice property owners to sell all or portions of their land rather than to continue to maintain it as open space or farmland. In the interest of preserving open space and keeping land available for agricultural use, it seems desirable for the town to take an active role in encouraging the

## Natural Resources, Open Space, Watersheds, Recreational Resources Goals and Objectives

*Preserve aesthetically and environmentally sensitive areas and water supplies.*

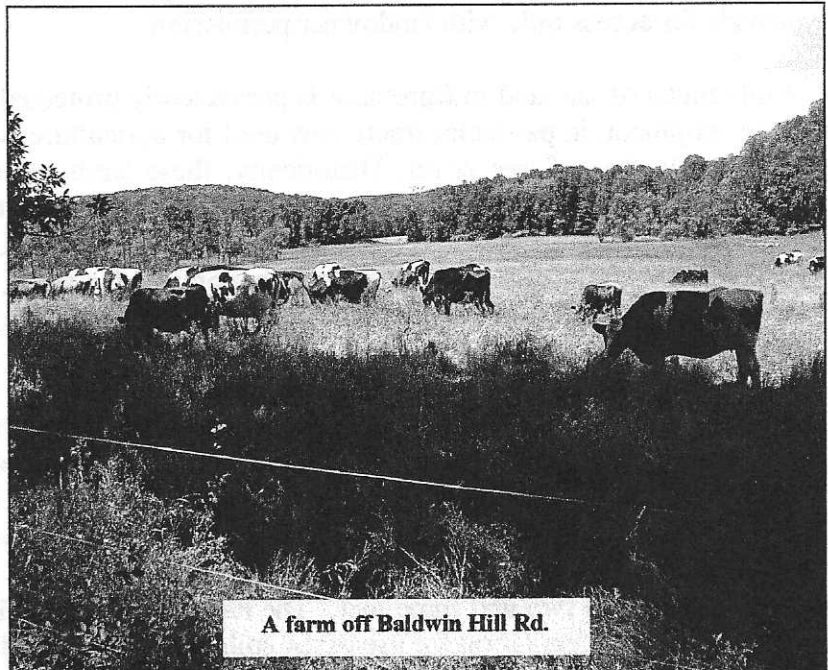
- ❖ Prioritize & protect scenic areas.
- ❖ Protect mountain ranges and steep slopes from inappropriate development.
- ❖ Protect and improve the water quality of streams, rivers, lakes and ponds.
- ❖ Identify and mitigate stormwater runoff problems on Town and private lands.
- ❖ Develop a long-range drinking water management program.
- ❖ Study and improve road management land use practices within watershed protection areas.
- ❖ Develop standards for minimizing light and sound pollution in all areas of town, especially with commercial uses.
- ❖ Coordinate efforts to implement Action Plan in Egremont's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

owners to maintain a significant percent of their land in a natural state in order to protect the town's rural character (See Map 7). Landowners can protect their land against future development and receive substantial tax benefits by placing a conservation restriction on their land through a conservation organization; the landowner continues to own and use the land according to the terms of the agreement.

## VIII. Land Use and Development Patterns

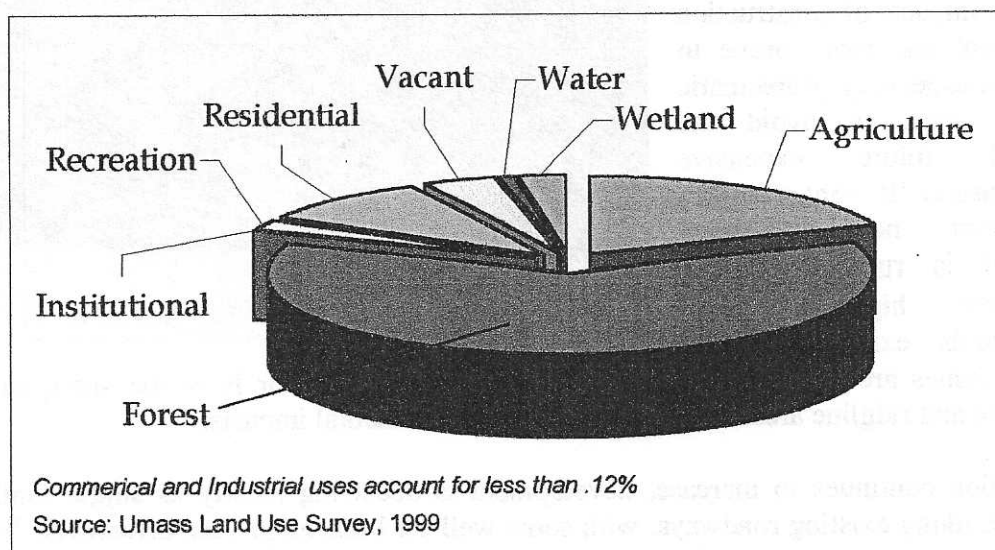
### A. Land Use Patterns

The town is defined by its two distinctive villages, where much of its developed land is located. Most of the Town's commercial land and mixed uses are centered in the villages. The town is hemmed in by mountains in the southern and western portions of Egremont. A network of local and state roads running north-south link the villages of North and South Egremont and the Egremont Plain area. Other roads provide access to the rural areas of town where many full-time, seasonal and large new homes can be found.



Of the over 12,000 total acres in Egremont nearly 51% are classified as developed or permanently protected and thus generally not available for further development<sup>8</sup>. Much of the remaining buildable land (approximately 5,957 acres) is covered in forest or pasture type land uses. In fact, forest currently exists on more than half (61%) of the acreage in town with agriculture (19%) and residential (10%) making up the remaining land use categories (See Table 8 and Map 8).

**TABLE 8 - Percent Land Use Categories**



<sup>8</sup> BRPC Buildi-Out, 2000.

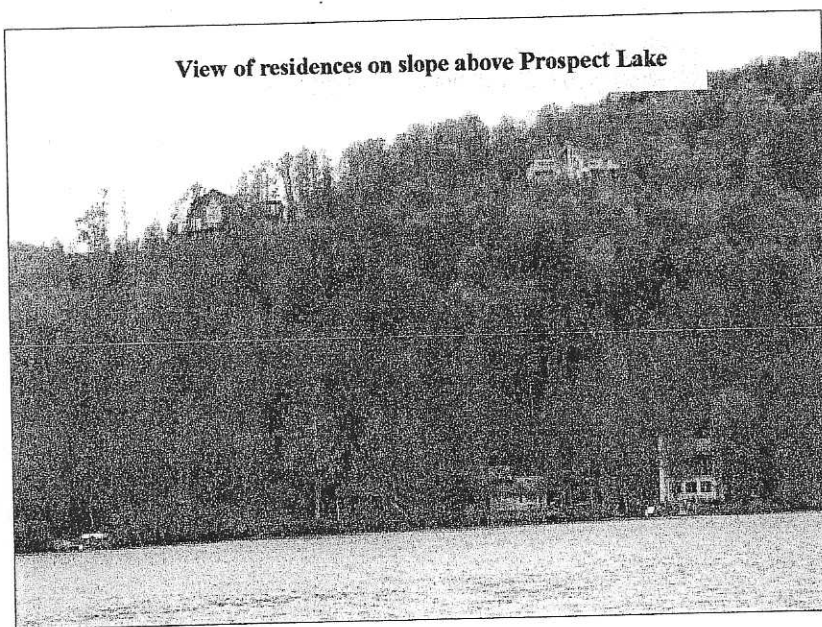


Approximately 2,714 acres, or 22.5% of the total area of the town, is permanently protected open space<sup>9</sup>. Permanently protected areas include the Jug End Reservation and much of the land nearby, the Appalachian Trail segments, and portions of Baldwin Hill. Some of these lands are publicly owned and serve as passive and active recreation outlets for residents and visitors. Privately owned protected lands provide for access only with landowner permission.

While much of the land in Egremont is permanently protected, large tracts of land still remain vulnerable to development, in particular tracts now used for agriculture which are level, well-drained, free of stones, and usually free of tree cover. Historically, these lands were home to a prosperous farming industry. Egremont farms produced such crops as hay, clover, corn, oats, wheat and to a lesser extent, milk, beef, vegetables, flowers, Christmas trees and landscaping stock<sup>10</sup>. Unfortunately, farm production has dropped in Egremont. As farming becomes less economical for some, these lands become available for possible development. If this trend to develop good agricultural lands persists, much of the agrarian character of Egremont will be lost.

Ease of building in the relatively flat, open and scenic agricultural areas also contributes to development pressures there. This development pressure is further increased by the limitations in other areas of Egremont's landscape. Many of Egremont's soils present limitations to future development, either because they are located on steep slopes, have shallow bedrock, or are unsuitable for septic fields. The United States Soil Conservation Service surveys indicate that in many areas the soils have hardpan at a depth of between two and three feet. The hardpan layer restricts the downward movement of water and imposes a severe limitation for use of the soils for septic tank disposal systems.

Another recent trend in Egremont is the construction of homes on hillsides and ridgelines, prompting some concern over a loss of views and increased erosion and runoff. Steeper areas often have thin soils and rocky outcrops that make them more sensitive to the impacts of construction and development and more prone to erosion. This is especially problematic in watershed areas to avoid the necessity of future expensive mitigation measures if contamination exists. However, not all upper elevation land is rugged ridgetop terrain; where high elevation agricultural fields exist, the same environmental issues are not present. Egremont should guide and/or limit the siting of structures in sensitive hillside and ridgeline areas in order to minimize detrimental impacts.



As the population continues to increase, development is occurring mostly as single family homes on various lot sizes along existing roadways, with some well set back on private driveways. While this type of development is popular, as evidenced by rapid growth in the area, it is very land intensive.

<sup>9</sup> Egremont Build-Out, 2000

<sup>10</sup> Egremont Open Space & Recreation Plan, 1988.

Development is limited by the necessity for individual sewage disposal systems and watershed protection laws. The recently completed Build-Out Analysis (See Appendix C) estimated that if land were to continue to be developed at its current rate under current zoning it would result in potentially 4,885 new buildable lots with 1,123 new students added to the public school system (See Table 9).

**TABLE 9 - Build-Out Analysis**

	Total Area of District (acres)	Net Developable Land Area (acres)	Potential Building Lots	Potential Dwelling Units	Add'l Residents	Add'l Water Use (GPD)	Add'l Municipal Solid Waste (tons)	Add'l Students in Public School
Total including Partially Constrained Areas	12,078	5,957	4,885	4,885	11,284	846,264	8,237	1,123

Source: BRPC Build-Out Analysis, 1999.

Despite the efforts of public and private non-profits to conserve land for long-term preservation residential development is continuing to grow, albeit at a slow rate. Nonetheless it consumes land in Egremont. Over the past three decades Egremont has seen a significant shift in land use. Since 1971 there has been a net loss of 445.80 acres of agricultural and recreational land. In contrast, there has been a 325.43 acres gain in residential land uses with the remaining in the other categories<sup>11</sup>. This reflects similar changes in land use all across the United States.

## **B. Village and Rural Residential Areas**

The traditional village patterns of nearly every small Berkshire town, built before 1930, is one of distinct blocks interconnected by street patterns, footpaths and sidewalks, significant structures (i.e. churches, dry good stores, residences, etc.) centered around open spaces or greens. In many instances, the design of a village was not dictated by town regulations but by the evolution of a preferred character, proximity to services and safety standards.

Egremont has two such areas: North Egremont Village and South Egremont Village. Each provides an insight into the traditional development pattern of the town. In addition, they provide a piece of history that should be promoted and maintained for future generations.

### **1. North Egremont Village**

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, the North Egremont Village is a rural, historic village that is in many ways similar to the south village, though somewhat smaller than it. Because there is no clear sense of where the village area begins and ends, further discussion is necessary to determine the most appropriate boundaries for a village district.

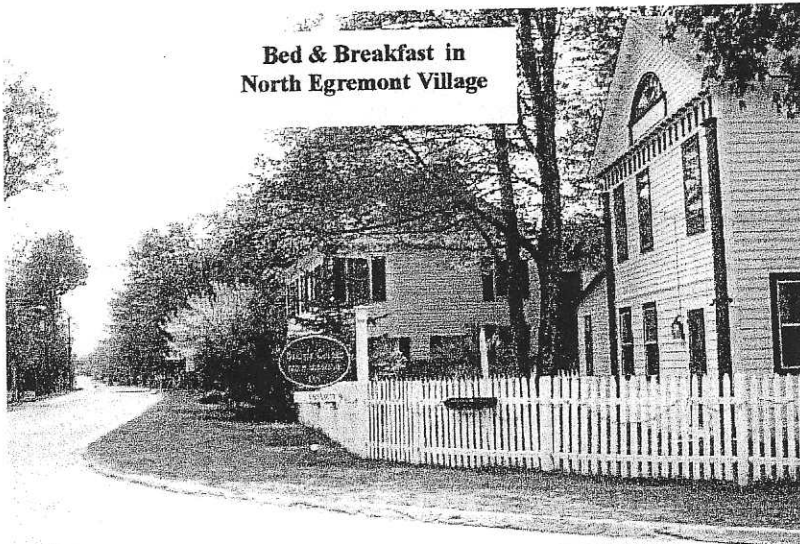
The North Egremont Village is unique in the sense that it is a residential area with recreation and commercial uses in scattered locations. Bordered by the Green River and intersected by Route 71, the

<sup>11</sup> *Umass land study, 1999.*

village has a sensitive environment, which has the potential for being altered through environmental contamination, development impacts and loss of community connectivity.

North Village is served by natural and recreational amenities. The Green River runs along the northeast side of Route 71, French Park (134.6 acres) is an active recreational park, and nearby Prospect Lake is an aesthetic resource as well as a location for many seasonal residences. Although not in immediate proximity to each other each of these resources can be accessed by foot or bicycle.

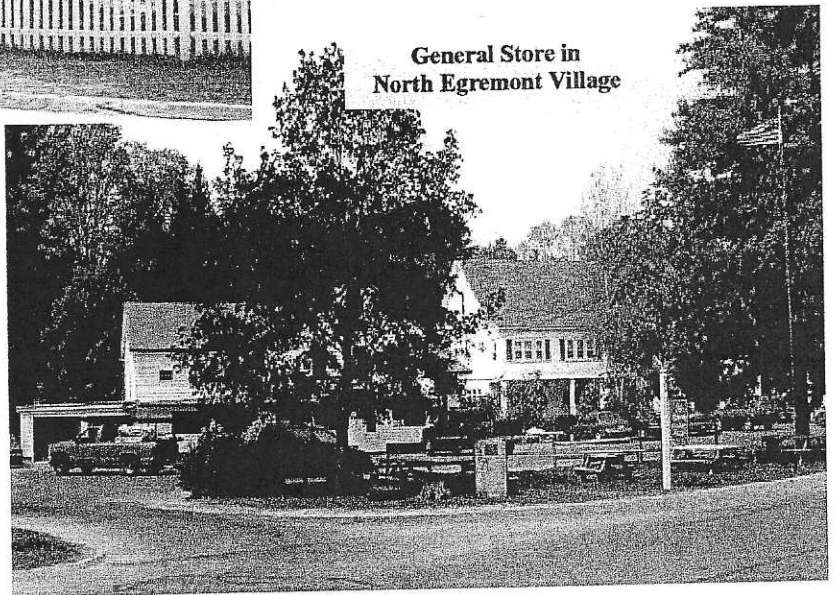
**Bed & Breakfast in  
North Egremont Village**



Egremont Plain Road (Route 71), a well-maintained road intersecting the village, has a posted speed limit varying from 35 mph to 50 mph. However, the posted limit is often exceeded since sections of the road are straight and there are no caution signs alerting drivers to the upcoming presence of pedestrians or the densely developed village zone.

In addition, to a few bed and breakfast establishments there exists a general store, a restaurant and post office. The general store and post office are essential, not only for the services they provide, but also for the sense of community they evoke. While it was unclear from the North Egremont Community Forum whether residents would like to increase business uses in the village it was clear that those businesses that currently exist should be preserved.

**General Store in  
North Egremont Village**



The current type of development occurring in North Egremont Village includes *Approval Not Required (ANR)* land divisions, which are new residential lots along the road with at least 150 feet of frontage and sometimes long driveways. Unfortunately, the Protective By-law limits the ability to construct housing to the same configuration, scale and setback as the historic village was built on. This inability has led to a new type of housing that is set off the road, further detaching it from the village type of atmosphere and community character which the Master Plan process has identified as important.

As with many other sections of the town, North Village has experienced the impacts of second home ownership. While seasonal residents are not the sole reason, it is evident that “neighborliness” is on the decline. Currently, the general store with the post office situated inside draws locals and serves as an informal meeting place. Without this hub residents feel that they would lose a community gathering spot



as well as a much-needed service. In addition, residents feel that a concerted effort should take place to reintroduce a mechanism for north village residents of all ages to gather.

Large tracts of privately-owned land line Route 71. Further, as the desire for land grows so too will new development on non-protected areas. Under current regulations, it is plausible for residential development to occur along this road in North Egremont Village. These parcels would essentially fill in the area from the country store south to the Town Hall. With this long-term development potential the village would lose its current historic character.

### **North Egremont Village Goals and Objectives**

*Retain the rural and historic quality of the North Egremont Village*

- ❖ Modify zoning to be consistent with existing development patterns.
- ❖ Support local regulations that promote appropriate scale, density and style of the structures and lots in the village areas.
- ❖ Encourage rural resource conservation in conjunction with any new development.
- ❖ Investigate incentives for maintaining the historic buildings and scale of the village.

*Preserve North Egremont's village center by supporting small-scale services which serve local needs and function as a village gathering point.*

- ❖ Work to retain residential conveniences in the village, such as the post office and general store.
- ❖ Investigate ways and opportunities for increased small-scale community gathering locations.
- ❖ Encourage neighborhood action committees to work on local issues.

*Preserve health and safety in North Egremont Village, including water quality, pedestrian safety and traffic control.*

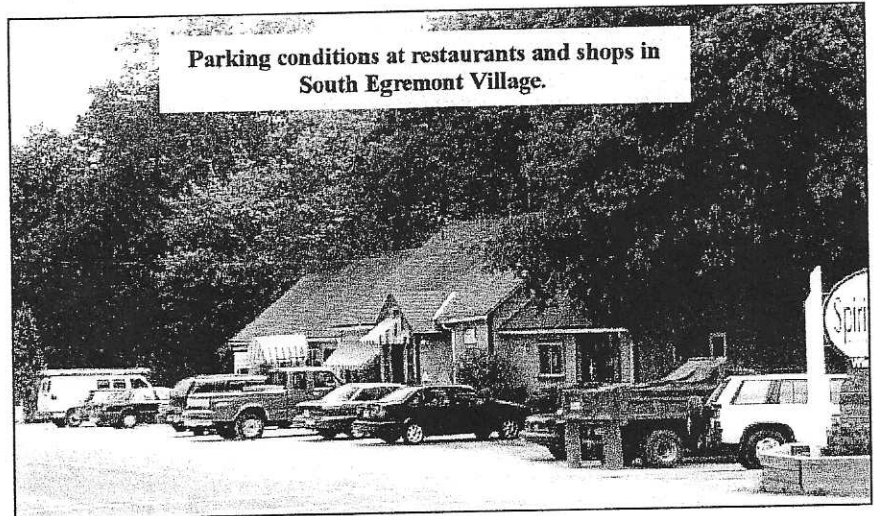
- ❖ Investigate current wastewater and drinking water issues and coordinate among municipal officials to resolve these issues.
- ❖ Use traffic calming methods and place markers to designate North Egremont village as a higher density village area in order to decrease traffic speeds and increase pedestrian safety.



## 2. South Egremont Village

Positioned along the Hubbard Brook and Route 23, the South Egremont Village has a long and rich history. Settled in the 1700 and 1800's as a prime commercial and industrial location many regard this area as an historic gem that must be preserved.

The South Egremont Village Historic District, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, is a blending of historic residential, public and commercial uses that serves as a social and economic center. It features interesting architecture and public buildings; social points such as a prominent church; various stores and offices where goods, financial, and personal services are available for residents as well as visitors.



The housing stock in South Egremont is fair to good. Due to its location as an original settlement much of the homes date before the 1900's. Newer homes are located on the fringes of the village area. Many of the older inner village homes are multi-family.

There are an increasing number of outward-looking enterprises located in the village. These include shops, boutiques, art galleries, real-estate offices, building contracting, restaurants, and inns. In fact, the Egremont Inn has been in operation since 1780. South Egremont Village's many attributes attract newcomers, visitors and businesses.

Each historic site can and should be considered on its own merits and attention should be given to each according to its needs and the desires of its owners. It is also important to preserve the overall historic context in which each historic building lies. Federal Income Tax credits are available for owners who rehabilitate designated properties according to federal preservation standards. The Historic Commission can continue to encourage and enable use of these tax credits as well as National Trust for Historic Preservation grants.

As a result of the homes being older and the existence of poor soil, many homes are experiencing failed septic systems. The homes that have upgraded their systems tend to have the approved mound system (similar to an earth berm) which is changing the landscape in the village.

During the mid 1900's, the Egremont Civic Authority, no longer in existence, organized and encouraged the maintenance and upkeep of homes and areas in South Egremont. This Authority helped preserve much of the historic housing stock for current and future residents to enjoy. The efforts of concerned residents and community-minded business owners have helped retain the village area and allow for its continued use as a vibrant community center. The results of these efforts can be continued with guided measures.

Not unlike the north village and most historic areas throughout the state, there exists a conflict between current zoning and desired use of the village. Currently South Egremont Village is a part of the same zone as the entire town. The highest density allowed is a 1-acre lot, with 150 feet of frontage and 40 feet of

setback from the road. No use except single-family housing is allowed by right. It is clear that most of the structures that exist in the village existed before the Protective By-law was established since they do not comply with the requirements.

The Town should review the current by-law and determine which requirements should be modified to fit best with the existing scale, setbacks, size and character of the village. In addition, it seems logical that the by-law also review the types of uses that are allowed by right as opposed to a special permit. Caution will be needed to assure the continued mixed residential and commercial nature of the village and not have commercial real estate values overpower residential uses. During this process it is essential that the Town consult with the residents and businesses to understand their needs and concerns further.

As the economy continues to change, the influx of tourists and second homeowners will help sustain the community but could also alter the character of the village. Active residents, town leaders, and organizations should continue to foster adaptation while protecting and preserving the historic, cultural and environmental features that are important components of the village's heritage.

Natural resources will also need to be considered in any future changes in the village. Hubbard Brook borders the southern edge of the village, and the Rivers Protection Act regulates development within 200 feet of this waterway. In addition, poor soil limits the type of development that is increasingly being demanded (i.e. larger cottages, smaller lots, full-time residences)

## South Egremont Village Goals and Objectives

*Maintain the scale, distinctive historic character and the natural attributes of South Egremont Village.*

- ❖ Identify the south village as a unique and historic area distinct from the rest of the Town.
- ❖ Provide mechanisms to continue the mix of uses and a common style, density and scale.

*Preserve the residential character of the south village by maintaining a balance of commercial and residential uses.*

- ❖ Explore ways to preserve the residential nature of the villages by preventing commercial real estate values from overpowering residential uses.
- ❖ Regulate commercial signage and lighting to be in balance with the residential uses in the area and the historic character of the village.

*Promote South Egremont as a walking village with a community feel.*

- ❖ Make the village a pedestrian-oriented area that provides for safe access to and around the village, including traffic calming measures to enhance pedestrian safety.
- ❖ Limit the disorganized vehicular traffic in the village resulting from improper and chaotic highway access patterns, including adequate curb cuts and appropriate markings.
- ❖ Promote continuous sidewalks, with increased grassy areas and other vegetation to make Rte. 23 in the village feel more like a main street and less of an open highway

*Promote improvements to the environmental health and safety of South Egremont village.*

- ❖ Work towards identifying and providing residents and business owners with safe water and proper mechanisms for wastewater disposal.
- ❖ Provide information to residents and business owners as to best practices to preserve and protect natural and historic resources.
- ❖ Eliminate unnecessary signage to enhance the effectiveness of critical road signs.

### 3. Rural Residential Areas

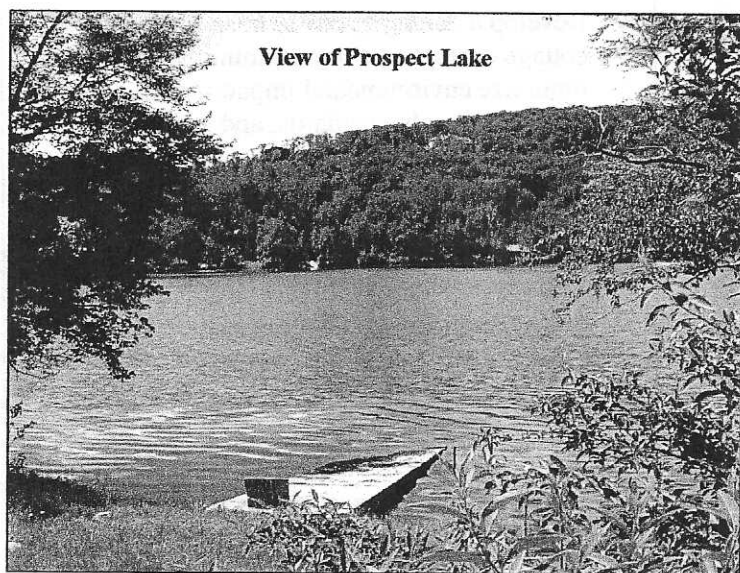
Outside the north and south villages of Egremont there are large tracts of potentially developable lands. As discussed elsewhere in this plan, the land in most of Egremont is essentially farm, forest and pastureland. Egremont's rich, relatively unspoiled landscape coupled with its proximity to more urban centers has created a strong second home development trend. This trend is predicted to continue as Egremont still offers developable land, reasonably-priced homes, and a low cost for services. Map 9 illustrates how Egremont may develop under current zoning regulations.

Egremont experienced a rise in its population and residential development during the late 1940's through the early 1960's where it began to level off. Home construction during this time occurred typically on along Jug End Rd, Mt. Washington Rd, Creamery Rd, Townhouse Hill Rd, and Blunt Rd. More dense development (less than 2 acres) occurred in areas on Taconic Lane, Blunt Rd, Pine Crest Hill, Egremont Heights, Berkshire Greens, and along the west end of Prospect Lake.

The current type of development occurring in the rural residential area includes *Approval Not Required (ANR)* or new residential along the road with at least 150 feet of frontage and sometimes long driveways. Even when lots exceed the minimum one-acre lot size, the 150-foot frontage requirement allows for sprawl-like development. The ANR type development, which is unique to Massachusetts, is creating a sprawl-like development along roadsides which is contributing to a loss of farmlands, open space, scenic areas and historic resources in Egremont.

One theme echoed throughout work on the Master Plan is the gradual loss of the Town's rural character. A proliferation of cookie-cutter, large lot subdivisions can eliminate agriculturally productive land and forest areas, destroy environmentally sensitive areas and views, and obliterate the traditional rural character of the community.

Of greatest concern in Egremont is the connection between development and sensitive environmental areas. Habitat areas of rare species dot the landscape along Mt. Washington Rd., Marsh Pond, wetlands around the northwest corner of Baldwin Hill, and east of the Prospect Lake campground. These areas are high priority areas for protection.



Another area of great concern is Prospect Lake. Prospect Lake with its 80 very small lots and 43 cottages is a popular summer cottage area. The development at Prospect Lake has had significant impacts on the land, water and views. Over the years this area has seen a significant amount of development pressure. This pressure combined with the presence of poor soil the area and failing septic systems which threaten the Lake and drinking water create an immediate need. Since it is plausible for another 37 cottages to be built in this area, a review of septic systems is needed to better determine what steps should be taken to remedy the conflict between desired development and water quality.



## Rural Area Goals and Objectives

*Encourage preservation of open spaces of all types including agricultural areas, forest lands, meadows, open fields, ridge tops and wetlands.*

- ❖ Determine what financial and organizational resources are available to aid in preservation and conservation (i.e. Community Preservation Act)

*Encourage ways to minimize the visual impact of any development in the rural areas to preserve the rural character of the town.*

- ❖ Investigate regulations and incentives for buffering and shielding new development to preserve rural character
- ❖ Encourage any new site development to conform to the least intrusive type of construction methods in order to preserve scenic and natural character in the rural areas.

*Preserve the rural character and scale of the town, including roadways, historical sites and low housing density.*

- ❖ Adopt tools that encourage the preservation of open space as part of any new development plan proposal.
- ❖ Protect open spaces valued by the community, particularly lands that contribute greatly to views along scenic roads.
- ❖ Work to protect large undeveloped forest, ridgeline and farm tracts.

*Where growth occurs in the rural areas, it should be residential, allowing other uses only if they are low impact and in keeping with the residential and open space character.*

- ❖ Investigate variable frontage requirements combined with increased acreage or dedicated open space as a means to reduce overall density of new development and preserve open space.
- ❖ Use regulatory tools and incentives, such as variable frontage requirements and cluster development, to preserve open space.
- ❖ Provide in the bylaws clear limits on development and especially commercial-type developments outside the village centers.

*Address the special needs of the high density development area on the west side of Prospect Lake.*

- ❖ Work with the Lake Association to determine the highest and best use of land and water along the edge of the lake.
- ❖ Develop a zoning bylaw to keep the small cottage character of the community, and minimize environmental impacts, such as lot coverage, height standards, and setbacks.
- ❖ Investigate options for resolving existing wastewater management and water supply problems and prevent new ones from occurring.
- ❖ Protect and improve water quality in Prospect Lake to keep it available for recreational purposes.

## **IX. Regional Cooperation**

### **A. Regional Planning**

The Towns of Mt. Washington and Egremont share valuable resources such as priority habitat areas, the Karner Brook watershed ACEC, the Schenob Brook ACEC, drinking water supplies and state forest land. They also rely on each other for town services and public recreational facilities. As such the two towns have agreed that there is a need for a formal and regular mechanism for increasing cooperative efforts between them. In response, the towns have joined together to create growth plans, funded in part from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

Initial interest for developing growth plans arose specifically from the need to investigate specific issues along joint borders, particularly the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, the shared mountain areas, viewsheds and watersheds. During the process, this relationship has spurred the realization that many other participants from New York, Alford, Sheffield, and Great Barrington must also be included when discussing these issues.

The ultimate goal of this project is to build consensus at the town and sub-regional level on how best to achieve a sustainable future for this area. To be sustainable, this future must be sensitive to the environment, community character, and economic base of the communities. Lack of effective regional planning can result in sprawl, Not-in-my-backyard or “NIMBY” disputes, threats to natural and scenic resources, and loss of a sense of identity and purpose of individual communities. Without cross-border and regional planning insights, the area is left with no means to comprehensively address regional developments with multi-jurisdictional impacts.

### **B. Issues of Importance to Egremont and Mt. Washington**

At the beginning of the growth plan process, the two towns separately surveyed their residents (including all taxpayers) and held public forums to uncover the town's strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses. Following the collection of this information, the towns formally met to discuss and evaluate common themes and issues.

The Committee members from Mt. Washington and Egremont discussed the following issues and agreed to continue to search for solutions:

- Visual Impact of ANY development along the border between the two towns
- The impacts of telecommunication towers in both Egremont and Mt. Washington
- The need for ridge top protection above 1,500 feet and the protection of fragile soils on steep slopes
- The need for common maintenance procedures especially for the watershed area
- The need for a cooperative agreement regarding maintenance of roads and the use of salt and herbicides
- The need for joint public safety protection procedures, including an investigation of police and fire response in Mt. Washington and how it affects Egremont's residents' service and cost for services so as not to physically and financially overburden the Town of Egremont
- The need for traffic regulations that limit the use of minor roads through Egremont for major events in Mt. Washington
- Mt. Washington's concerns with light pollution and development impacts from a local ski resort

In order to begin the process of working to improve negative impacts and improve and resolve conflicting policies, the towns agreed to share and review each other's existing policies and regulations and support the collective creation of implementation strategies in their respective final growth plans. In addition, they agreed to hold annual working sessions, in which local officials would be encouraged to attend, to discuss progress to date and any unresolved issues. Of greatest importance is the need to better understand the cost of services provided and town contributions for those services, maintenance and management practices for roads and watersheds, and how regulations adopted at the local level can affect the quality of life for residents in other communities. It was also stressed that communication on such topics should include representatives from other communities and states.

### **Potential Regional Action Strategies**

*The following is a list of items that the Towns of Egremont and Mt. Washington have agreed on in order to improve their regional planning practices.*

- ❖ Institute a formal annual meeting schedule for the review of all common issues, including topics related to management, policy and budget for shared community services.
- ❖ Develop a process for noticing each other on board and commission public meetings especially in cases involving regionally-significant projects.
- ❖ Provide each other with copies of proposed zoning bylaw updates and amendments.
- ❖ Encourage on-going discussion and participation on projects that have cross-town and/or regional significance.

## **X. Strategies for the Future**

### **A. Managing Growth**

With all these issues identified and the town's goals and objectives made clear, methods for achieving the goals must be developed. The Master Plan offers the necessary steps to reach these goals, and the town should proceed to follow these action strategies to protect the interests the townspeople have identified.

Managing growth is essential to the future of Egremont. Placing limits on growth implies reducing the negative effects of unplanned development and its possible irreparable damage of the town's special qualities. Sustainable growth management involves the following guiding principles:

- Spatial efficiency in land use development and management
- Preservation of sensitive environments and open space
- Social equality and character of life
- Fiscal responsibility and economic stability

A growth management strategy involves the protection of fragile and important natural resource areas, designation of areas where development should be restricted, areas where appropriate densities may vary from the current standards, and the reservation of tracts of land for specific residential and non-residential uses. For the long term, land areas with identified moderate constraints and lands of concern should be considered for permanent conservation restrictions. Other growth management methods would include zoning, other regulations, design guidelines and a careful control of infrastructure.

The general purpose of this Plan is to help the Town of Egremont manage growth and change in order to comprehensively minimize negative fiscal, environmental, social and other impacts, while guiding allowed development and redevelopment to meet the needs of the community, and when possible the region. This plan explores some of the linkages between different aspects of the community and how certain actions or non-actions can have effects on the community. In summary, this plan exposes the need to manage residential growth so that it grows in a fiscally sound manner so that resident's services are not over-burdened and community character is not lost. The Master Plan offers the necessary steps to reach the ideas, goals and objectives developed by the town and its residents. Implementation of the strategies therefore protects the ideals the townspeople have worked so hard to identify.

### **B. Public Investment in Planning**

All implementation strategies of this plan are based on the community vision, goals and objectives identified in the master plan sections. These goals and objectives (See Plan Sections and Appendix A) were the result of the community survey, public forum and numerous public meetings over the past two years.

Residents of Egremont now have an important role to play in guiding the future of their town and the region. Participation in the implementation of this plan is a powerful way for townspeople to contribute to the future quality of life in Egremont. In addition, the Town government has an active role to play in the implementation of this Plan and in monitoring its progress.

Lastly, the Master Plan will need to be updated to remain a viable document. The earliest logical time to review and prepare modest updates to the Plan will be within 5 years after approval.



## C. Action Strategies

This Master Plan sets out four categories for implementation of the action strategies. The Immediate Action Strategies are those that emerged as having an urgent need to protect valuable assets from possible loss. Damage to these assets could cause irreversible loss over a very short period of time, but addressing these issues through relatively quick action could prevent such losses. Next, Priority Action Strategies demonstrate the items identified by this Master Plan as being essential to the success of the town in the short term. These action items should be acted upon within the next two years or less. The Secondary Action Strategies should be strategically developed overtime. These action items should be acted on within 2 to 6 years. Lastly, the On-Going Action Strategies are those items that ensure that continued attention is being paid to this plan and any other corresponding plans such as the Open Space Plan.

### Immediate Action Strategies

Suggested Action Strategy	Suggested Leadership	Plan Section Reference <sup>12</sup>
Conduct a town-wide inventory of historic and cultural resources.	Historical Commission	Section II
Create regulations that delay demolition or severe alteration of historic resources until proper review is conducted.	Planning Board and Historical Commission	Section II
Create an inventory of historic landmark trees and develop an ongoing tree protection and maintenance program.	Selectboard, Tree Warden, and Historical Commission	Section VII
Create a process involving local residents for reviewing all proposed paving of unpaved roads and all road widenings.	Selectboard	Section VI
Adopt regulations that manage the impact of construction and other activities such as logging which are allowed in sensitive areas.	Planning Board Conservation Commission	Section VIII

<sup>12</sup> See Plan Sections and Appendix A for a more detailed description of Goals and Objectives that detail these suggested actions.

**Priority Action Strategies**

Suggested Action Strategy	Suggested Leadership	Plan Section Reference <sup>14</sup>
Create zoning bylaws that address the unique land use needs for the north and south village areas. Include such items as lot size, intensity of uses, densities, mixed uses, parking, run off controls, residential uses, commercial uses, home occupations, etc.	Planning Board and Board of Health	Section V Section VIII
Investigate mechanisms to retain scenic qualities of rural areas and promote greater open space (i.e. set backs, lot coverage, resource protection overlay zones, cluster zoning, etc.)	Planning Board and Building Inspector	Section VIII
Develop zoning regulations or incentive programs that provide housing for different categories and income levels of residents, such as seniors, first-time homebuyers, etc.	Planning Board	Section IV
Initiate a formal site plan review process for projects requiring a special permit.	Planning Board, Building Inspector, Board of Health, & Highway Department	Section VIII
Develop performance standards for appropriate projects.	Planning Board, Building Inspector, Board of Health, & Highway Department	Section VIII
Form an Egremont Housing Committee to investigate affordable housing options for the Town.	Selectboard	Section IV
Conduct an in depth housing needs inventory	Selectboard, participate with S. Berkshire Housing Coalition	Section IV
Develop regulations that address air, light and sound standards.	Planning Board	Section VII
Create criteria for performance standards for reviewing new driveway constructions.	Planning Board and Highway Department	Section VI
Investigate the creation of a bylaw for shared or common driveways.	Planning Board and Highway Department	Section VI
Investigate mechanisms for addressing commercial use of land through by-right home occupations, special permits with measured standards for other low-impact home-based businesses on a low-density basis in the rural areas, and for other businesses to be located mainly in the villages in balance with residential uses.	Planning Board	Section V

<sup>14</sup> See Plan Sections and Appendix A for a more detailed description of Goals and Objectives that detail these suggested actions.

### Secondary Action Strategies

Suggested Action Strategy	Suggested Leadership	Plan Section Reference <sup>14</sup>
Determine how growth and various types of development affect community services.	Planning Board and Finance Committee	Section III
Create a guide to historic properties and make it available to the public.	Historical Commission	Section II
Undertake an analysis of the long-term impacts to the watershed, surface and groundwater areas from source and non-point source pollution (including stormwater and wastewater).	Conservation Commission	Section VII
Determine best management practices for maintaining and preserving environmental and water quality.	Conservation Commission	Section VII
Investigate incentives for property owners who continue to maintain the historic character of buildings in the village.	Historical Commission and Planning Board	Section II
Review Subdivision Controls as to design standards to provide a balance between safety and design appropriate to the town's character.	Planning Board	Section VIII

<sup>14</sup> See Plan Sections and Appendix A for a more detailed description of Goals and Objectives that detail these suggested actions.

### On-Going Action Strategies

Suggested Action Strategy	Suggested Leadership	Plan Section Reference <sup>14</sup>
Determine costs and benefits of various municipal programs and services.	Selectboard and Finance Committee	Section III
Institute a long-range planning program for evaluating revenues and expenditures.	Selectboard and Finance Committee	Section III
Investigate costs of providing services to areas outside Egremont.	Selectboard and Finance Committee	Section III
Conduct meetings with abutting towns to continue to discuss regional issues.	Planning Board and Selectboard	Section IX
Routinely update the map that shows protected and non-protected open space as well as priority areas for future protection	Planning Board	Section VIII
Research funding techniques to protect and/or purchase development rights on sensitive land areas.	Selectboard, Finance Committee, and Planning Board	Section VII
Implement Open Space Plan Action items.	Select Board, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission	Section VII
Routinely share information on special projects with abutting municipalities.	Selectboard and Planning Board	Section IX
Hold, at a minimum, annual meetings to review planning activities and discuss best practices.	Selectboard and Planning Board	Section IX
Monitor implementation of Master Plan through an oversight planning committee.	Selectboard	Section X
Create a formalized system to regularly address the Selectboard on town's progress in implementing the Master Plan and Open Space Plan.	Master Plan Steering Committee and Planning Board	Section X

<sup>14</sup> See Plan Sections and Appendix A for a more detailed description of Goals and Objectives that detail these suggested actions.



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## MASTER PLAN ADDENDUM

After about two years spent in the preparation of this draft Master Plan, the Plan was made available to townspeople in the spring of 2002 for review and comment at a public meeting held on April 6, 2002. About 50 people attended that meeting and comments, many of them spirited, were made on a variety of topics within the Plan. After the hearing, townspeople had further opportunity to comment during a written comment period of five weeks. Nine letters were received, along with a petition signed by 83 residents urging an opportunity for further public input.

Views expressed at the meeting and during the written comment period were divergent. Some were generally favorable and some not favorable. It was very helpful to the committee to be directed to specific elements of the plan where opinions differed and to have specific recommendations for improvement made. The committee has reviewed all of them, and all written comments received will be included in the final plan. Where the committee felt that information was lacking or that a majority or prevailing view was incorrectly represented, changes have been made within the text of the Plan or through this Addendum. There were many areas where the committee felt that the majority view was fairly represented, based on the full range of input received from the community during the Master Plan process. Nonetheless, those issues raised are presented here along with the committee's discussion of them.

The committee thanks the townspeople for their interest and participation and looks forward to further review by townspeople and the completion of this Plan.

### Issues Raised during Review of the Draft Master Plan

**Basic information in the Plan:** Comments were made that there were inconsistencies in the data of the Master Plan. All the data and information in the Plan was accumulated and analyzed by our planning consultant, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Information was derived from several sources, including the US Census, and not all databases defined the various categories in the same way or were consistent in their findings. Therefore, there is some inconsistency between various graphs, charts, and the text. Wherever possible, this was updated and corrected prior to release of the draft to be as current and consistent as possible. Census information was updated to be as current as possible as the results of the Year 2000 US Census filtered in. However, it is not possible to continuously update such results nor to bring all the various sources into conformity. It should be remembered that this is general information with which to assess our town and its growth issues, and absolute perfection is neither feasible nor necessary.

**Maps in the Plan:** All maps in the plan were created using GIS (Geographic Information System), a computerized mapping system which builds on information from different sources. It is not possible for this information to be completely accurate with existing resources. For example, the assessors maps which form one of the data layers couldn't be precise without a survey of every parcel in town, so all map layers which are based on the assessors maps, such as parcels of protected land, reflect those same

inaccuracies. The maps in the Plan are for general planning purposes only. If at any point the town decides to adopt bylaws which denote certain areas of town for specific land uses, then accurate maps will be drawn as the basis for that specific bylaw.

**Input from townspeople:** Some concerns were expressed about the validity of the town-wide written survey that was part of the basis for the Plan. The survey was based on similar surveys used in other towns, with some revision by the committee to reflect the nature of our town. Extensive comments were also received as part of the survey. In addition to that, input was received during a total of four public meetings. All of this input is available for review at the Town Hall and was used in writing the draft. With the addition of this Summary and the changes made to the draft after the Public Meeting, the committee feels that the Plan fairly represents all input received. However, it is most important to keep in mind that divergent views were presented throughout the process, and that the conclusions of the Master Plan, while believed to represent a majority view, should not be taken as the exclusive position of townspeople in Egremont.

**Land Use: Balance of land preservation and development:** Many comments were received that the Master Plan represented an anti-business and anti-development approach.

In the two villages, the presence of businesses in the villages is relatively non-controversial as part of a mix of residential and business uses. In other areas, especially Route 23 west of the village there is some controversy about whether to maintain the present balance of residential and business use or to shift the balance toward more residential or more business use.

Based on townspeople input and the general satisfaction with the mixed uses in our two village centers, the Master Plan supports continuation of the present balance of commercial and residential uses in the village areas with the remainder of the town continuing the traditional New England pattern of predominantly residential uses outside of village areas. The Master Plan supports businesses in areas where businesses currently exist by recommending that the bylaw process be adapted to make changes in those businesses much easier and less discretionary than the process that exists now. The Plan also supports home occupations in all areas of town, while recognizing the need for a clearer definition of what would be allowed as a home occupation. The plan further supports businesses which serve local needs and a continuation of the kinds of low-impact businesses presently in the area. This is consistent with the desire of residents to keep Egremont basically the way it is. Because there continues to be controversy about the increase of businesses in predominantly residential areas and along highways, much more input from townspeople will be necessary to determine the approach the town will take to the types and location of businesses outside the village areas.

Other comments related to the protection of landowners' property values and whether preservation of open space would take away landowner's opportunities to receive value from their property. Land preservation and retaining value in land are not mutually exclusive. In fact, many property owners values have escalated because of the advantages that open space protection have brought. The Master Plan recommends that the town explore methods to achieve both goals through bylaw and land conservation

techniques and by making our bylaws creative and flexible enough to allow more sophisticated land use planning within the town.

While the Master Plan advocates protection of agricultural lands, it does not advocate any specific agricultural zoning. As with other open space areas, more exploration of land use planning techniques is necessary, along with gaining consensus from townspeople, before any specific land use planning method is recommended.

Comments were received concerning areas of town which have high elevation land which are, nonetheless, agricultural and do not have steep rocky slopes. The Plan has been amended to reflect the existence of these high elevation meadow lands. The recommendation to adopt the Scenic Mountain Act has been removed from the Plan, with the recognition that sensitive lands should be protected from harmful impacts but that not all high elevation land is sensitive. As with agricultural land and other open space land, more study is needed to determine the right approach to sensitive lands protection for the town.

**Housing:** During the Master Plan process, an area-wide study of affordable housing was undertaken by several towns, including Egremont. While the Master Plan recognizes the need for housing for a diverse population in town, the specifics of Egremont's housing needs were not addressed due to the area-wide study. That study has now been concluded, and the Master Plan recommends that Egremont form a housing study committee to build on the results of that study in a way tailored to Egremont's particular situation. The need for a variety of housing options is great and addressing that need should receive the attention of a very focused effort, much more than a Master Plan could cover.

**Implementation of the Plan:** The draft Master Plan recommended a number of actions be taken and indicated levels of priority for each. Comments were received that those actions listed first were not necessarily the most urgently needed ones. Several actions were recommended which may not have been of most overriding need in the town but which could prevent irreversible changes to our historic, cultural and natural heritage in a very short period of time. Some of these goals have already been addressed, as the town has received two grants in the past year, one related to heritage tree care and one for watershed protection through conservation of high elevation land; the presence of these protective goals in the Master Plan draft helped in the acquisition of these grant funds.

## MASTER PLAN FINAL SUMMARY AND ADOPTION

Following full review of the matters raised in the April 6, 2002, public meeting and written materials received thereafter, the Planning Board presented a new draft to townspeople. Notice was sent by mail to all residents, voters, and taxpayers that the draft was available for review and that a Public Hearing would be held on November 16, 2002.

The November 16, 2002, Public Hearing, was attended by approximately 100 townspeople with the full Planning Board hearing comments from the group. The meeting, which was moderated by Peter Goldberg, began at approximately 9:45 AM, and continued for approximately 3 hours. Discussion covered most of the topics discussed at the April 6, 2002, meeting and reviewed in the Master Plan Addendum. Tapes of the Public Hearing are on file with the Planning Board at the Egremont Town Hall.

Following additional changes to the Master Plan based on input at the November 16, 2002, Public Hearing, and an update of census material which had not been previously available, the Planning Board voted to adopt the Master Plan at its regular meeting on March 10, 2003.